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SHRIKSHETRA

A replica of Indian Culture

● Sarat Ch. Mohapatra

Shrikshetra of Puri Jagannath, as is commonly known, can verily be said to be a truthful replica of Indian culture. To understand this culture, one has to have some idea of the history of this land, which again is different from that of other countries of the world. Indian history does not contain accounts of imperialistic aggressions or invasions into the territorial integrity of any nation. It is, on the other hand, a history of assimilation, a perfect adjustment to a specific environment which began thousands of years ago which, historians earmark as the period of Indus valley civilization. Both Mahenjodaro and Harappa reveal that it was not an incipient civilization (that had to their creation) but they had millions of human endeavours behind them. As Nehru felt, it was like some ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thoughts, had been inscribed and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously. The culture that grew up here and hinted at by Nehru, was not an anthropomorphic entity but a perfect adjustment and synthesis of diverse racial cultures. If one care to analyse further, would find out that it is a curious mixture of free thoughts and orthodoxy. Nevertheless it is the inner creativity of the people belonging to this country and their strong religious and spiritual faith that led to the growth of a dynamic Indian culture based on tolerance.

A person trying to understand the basics of Indian culture can very well study the history of Shrikshetra with its

innumerable temples, Mathas and Ashramas and, however tantalising they may appear outwardly, they would at long last espouse the essence of Indian culture which is basically a harmonious blending of diverse thoughts and philosophies, not a synthesis but a perfect agreement, each maintaining its own peculiar idea yet forming into one indivisible wholenamed India. This Indianness is an emotional experience which breeds and develops a queer feeling of oneness.

Jainism and Buddhism : Of the two, Jainism is more ancient than Buddhism and basically approved the precepts of the Vedas. On the other hand the Hindus were the believers in the Vedas from which the Brahmin religion had its impetus. The Vedas were casted as *Mantras* (hymns etc.) and *Brahmanas* and the *Brahmanic* religion started thriving on the tenets of the Vedas. The historians believe that *Rishabhadeva* or *Rishabha*, traditionally known as the founder of Jainism, is inseparably associated with the cultural history of ancient Orissa. The *Hatigumpha*, inscriptions have a reference to an image of Kalinga Jaina being carried away from Orissa by a king belonging to the *Nanda* dynasty. Whether that was the image of Sitalnath, the tenth of their *Tirthankara* (Jaina Preceptor) or none other than *Rishava*, is a matter of controversy. However, the fact remains that the gospel of Jainism had been extensively preached in Orissa and it was all time high during the reign of *Kharavela* in the 1st century B.C. Stone inscriptions and



sculpture speak galore about this impact, and finally, of the trinity of the cult.

That there had been a cross - cultural interaction between the resident non-Aryans of India and the immigrant Aryans is a foregone conclusion. It is this cross cultural interaction that precisely gave the peculiar shape to Indian culture. The appearances of the Indians residing in the foothills of the Himalayas, there living in person's pygmalion point is the Nicober island (for that is the souther-most tip of the Indian sub continent) their language, food and dress, art and music so also architecture all point out unmistakably to this grand fusion of subcultures into the big one. When we concentrate our attention on *Shrikshetra*, we perceive immediately that it enshrines, within its limited boundaries, a fusion of various faiths, traditions and sub-cultures to give it the most acceptable shape of a replica of the Indian culture. A study of the Jagannath cult and a survey of *Shrikshetra* gives us this idea of strength.

Starting from Lord Jagannath himself, the history has it that he was a tribal deity, adorned by the Savaras, as a symbol of *Narayan*. Another legend claims him to be *Nilamadhava*, an image of *Narayana* made of blue stone and worshipped by the aborigines. He was brought to *Nilagiri* (blue mountain) or *Nilachala* and installed there as *Jagannath* in company with *Balaram* and *Subhadra*. The images made of wood are also claimed to have their distant linkage with the aboriginal system of worshipping wooden poles. To cap it all the *Daitapatis*, who have a fair share of responsibilities to perform rituals of the Temple, are claimed to be descendants of the aborigines or hill tribes of Orissa. So we may safely claim that the beginning of the cultural history of *Shrikshetra* is found in the fusion of Hindu

and Tribal Cultures. This has been accepted as a facet of our proud heritage. The three deities came to be claimed as the symbols of *Samyak Darshan*, *Samyak Jnana* and *Samyak Charita* usually regarded as Triratha (of the Jaina cult), an assimilation of which leads to *Moksha* (salvation) or the ultimate bliss.

Growth of Buddhism in India is also an important phenomenon since the sixth century B.C. and is considered wielding much impetus on the intellectual movement of the contemporary period. Some of the Indian historians consider Buddha to be a great social reformer while others tend to attach some importance to his humanitarian approach. However Buddhism grew up enormously and transcended the Geopolitical boundary of India.

Chandashoka (Ashoka the violent or fierce) turned into *Dharmashoka* (Ashok the religious) in 261 B.C. after the blood bath he had in *Kalinga Yuddha* (war) and ultimately the Mourya empire declined after Ashok. This *Kalinga* war was the turning point in the Indian history as the vanquished *Kalinga* conquered her victor. The holocaust witnessed by emperor Ashoka left an indelible mark on his emotive sense and he accepted Buddhism and followed the same throughout his life thereafter. Although historians differ in their opinion if *Kalinga* was the turning point in the life of Ashoka but there is no doubt that this is one of the reasons which turned *Chandashoka* to *Dharmashoka*. His rock edicts, better known as "Kalinga Edicts" say, "All men are my children. Just as for my children I desire that they are united with all welfare and happiness of this world and of the next precisely do I desire if for all men".

Some scholars have come forward to stake a claim on the Trinity on behalf of



Buddhism. According to them Jagannath, Balaram and Subhadra stand for Buddhism (of the enlightened) Dharmam (the religion) and Sangham (of the organisation). It is well known that the Buddhists do have strong allegiance to these three aspects of their religion. The Hindus have also a seal of recognition on their claim by accepting Jagannath as the symbol of Buddha. That Shrikshetra does not recognise differences of caste and creed is the focal point on which the Buddhists base their claims. The caste system as it is commonly known, is a basic idea of Hinduism. Without going into the claims and counter-claims of the scholars we have noticed a fair amount of cross-cultural cohesion in the growth and development of the Jagannath culture.

Lord Jagannath is worshipped as *Vishnu* or *Narayan* or *Krishna* and simultaneously regarded as the *Vairava* (Shiva the formidable) with Vimala (the *Vairavi* or the consort of Shiva) installed in the campus of the temple. So ultimately we find a fusion of Saivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism of the Hindu religion with Jainism and Buddhism in the culture of Jagannath and the cultural tradition so reverently held together in *Shrikshetra*.

History has it that Guru Nanak (1469-1539) the founder of Sikhism in India travelled extensively throughout the length and breadth of India. He paid a visit to Puri with two of his disciples Bala and Manda, the former a Hindu and latter a Muslim and stayed here for some days. His disciples dug a hole in the sea beach in quest of potable water for the use of their Guru. On being considered holy, subsequently, it was converted into a well and a Gurudwara was erected in memory of Guru Nanak and the Granth Sahib the sacred book of religion of the Sikhs, placed there for reciting hymns

from it (*Sabad path*).

Muslim invasions into the Hindu Kingdom of Orissa started in the 13th century A.D. with their strong base in the adjoining province of Bengal. Those invasions were repulsed with intermittent spells of defeat on the part of the contemporary ruling kings of Orissa. This kind of attacks and counter-attacks continued up to the 16th century when finally in 1568 A.D. Orissa came under the Muslim rule. The impact of Muslim rule can not be felt so much in the Puri district although it is felt to have left permanent testimony in the District of Cuttack in the form of Muslim monuments and burial grounds. Although Shrikshetra does not contain any such monument, it can boast of the burial ground of Salabeg, a muslim yet a great devotee of Lord Jagannath who composed a lot of devotional poems for the Lord. Haridas, (c 1450-1530) a muslim disciple of Sri Chaitanya, is more known as Javan Haridas (Haridas the muslim). He died in the *Shrikshetra* and his mortal remains were buried in the sea shore by Sri Chaitanya himself.

At the outset we have mentioned that *Shrikshetra* represents the essence of Indian culture, Unity in diversity. Till now we have tried to present legendary so also historical facts to prove our contention that Shrikshetra stands for its unique cross cultural phenomenon and the fact is unchallengeable that Lord Jagannath is a symbol of diverse concepts and ideologies with regard to gods and religions. With its origin as a tribal deity in the hoary past, Jagannath plays the multifaceted role of *Vishnu* and *Siva* on one hand and the trinity as the symbol of Jainism and Buddhism. Even the Muslims like Salabeg and Haridas offered Him prayers for their salvation. It has



to be accepted therefore that the philosophy that grew up in *Shrikshetra* with Lord Jagannath in the centre-stage defied a simplistic or for that matter a dogmatic definition. More over, the shrine known as *Shrikshetra* is a place with monasteries performing diverse rites according to their ideology. It is the most liberal outlook of the contemporary king of Khurda or the Raja of Puri who granted pieces of land to the founders of these monasteries.

Historically Govardhan Pitha of the Sankaracharya sect seems to be the oldest of the monasteries in Puri established by one of his disciples. Sankaracharya preached *Advaita* philosophy. Nevertheless *Shrikshetra* can boast of monasteries belonging to the seats preaching *Dvaitavad*, *Dvaitadvaitavad*, *Vishista Advaitavad* and so on and so forth. So there are monasteries belonging to *Ramanuja* sect, *Ramanandi* sect, *Nimbarka* sect, *Goudia Vaisnav* sect, and the list is endless. Some other monasteries are there which preach slightly different religious philosophy besides the eminent ones mentioned above. They follow different rituals and ways of life. Kalitilak Math, Balabhadra Akhara, Bada Oriya Math, Ramkrishna Mission Ashram and the rest of others belong to this category. Outwardly, they may be having different religious philosophies and different missions to perform, but this can be said for certain that all these institutions have been taking part in the temple rituals on a routine basis for centuries past. So it can be said that other organisations are now ingrained in the infrastructure of *Shrikshetra*.

Some of these monasteries are having rich libraries containing printed books and

manuscripts. They also offer shelter to people belonging to their sects while some of them have arrangements to provide temporary shelter to pilgrims. Most of them also carry out charitable works in some form or the other. Taking all these pieces of brief informations about their organisations alongside the colourful administration in the temple complex engaging hundreds of sevakas, their supervisors and top administrators, the total picture is almost incomprehensible. But the aspect one can gain out of the whole discussion is that *Shrikshetra* stands out uniquely and pre-eminently as a replica of Indian history and culture. Whether it is a *Shaiva Kshetra* or a *Vishnutirtha* is entirely out of context and not in conformity with the philosophy that has grown up here during the centuries past with Lord Jagannath as the pivotal force. The only consideration that prevails here is that everything belongs to Him and He belongs to everybody, every organisation or even every dwelling house of common people and the palace of the king as well. Nothing in *Shrikshetra* the holy concourse can be conceived of without *Purusottama* or Lord Jagannath as the Lord of *Shrikshetra* and the symbol of universal humanism. He is the great synthesizing force behind the entire gamut of *Shrikshetra* and therefore, it has assumed a stature which can unmistakably be claimed as a faithful replica of India.



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PURI

● **Mahi Mohan Tripathy**

Puri, the holy land of Lord Jagannath has many names. It is mentioned in Puranas as Srikshetra, Sankhakshetra, Neelachala, Neeladri, Purusottama Dham, Purusottama Kshetra, Purusottama Puri and Jagannath Puri. May be, Puri is a shortened name for Jagannath Puri or Purusottama Puri. In some records pertaining to the British rule, the word 'Jagannath' was used for Puri.

A reputed researcher Prof. Panchanana Mohanty has discussed the origin of the term 'Puri' from linguistic point of view. In ancient time this place, i.e. Puri was inhabited by Savara tribe, Savara, Santal, Bonda tribes belong to the Munda tribal group. Lord Jagannath was originally a tribal deity, as mentioned by poet Sarala Das in his Mahabharat, and also in subsequent writings of other poets and historians. The aboriginal tribe must have ascribed a name of their place of living and that name must have been a word from a tribal dialect of the Munda group. In Bonda dialect, the word 'Pur' means flood. In Santali dialect 'Puri' has four meanings - world, sea, place and abode. Prof. Mohanty presumes that 'Puri', a Munda word for sea, was later on ascribed to this place on the seashore.

As aforesaid, 'Puri' in Santali also means abode (Pura). In the island of Bali under Indonesia, the words 'Pura' and 'Praasaad' are applied to a temple. In Bali,

the famous temple of 'Purebesakhi' is known as praasaad. The word 'Praasaad' (palace) is also used for the temple at Puri. A great Oriya Poet Upendra Bhanja has stated in a poem that the 'Lord has come out of the praasaad on car festival day in order to redeem the fallen.'

There is predominance of Hindu culture in Bali. It is evident that during the 5th - 7th century A.D., or even earlier, some sailors and traders from Kalinga (south-east Orissa) migrated to and settled permanently in Bali island. According to a report of the Archaeological Survey of Burma (1916), the name of the old Prome region of Burma was Criksetra (Srikshetra). It was a Hindu colonial kingdom. Its early settlers had come from Kalinga. Perhaps 'Prome' is a derivative term from 'Puram' (Pura). Presumption could be made that in the distant past, the temple of Lord Jagannath was also known as 'Pura' and the place (habitat) around it was named Puri.

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JAGANNATH PURI - the Abode of the God of the Universe

● Biranchi Narayan Dash

Jagannath Puri, which is simply called Puri, the abode of Sri Jagannath, the God of the Universe, is mentioned in the Puranas as *Shri Kshetra, Purusottama Kshetra* and *Nilachala*. The temple of Shri Jagannath is well known throughout India as a place of pilgrimage from days of yore, along with its antiquity. In this temple are installed Sri Jagannath Deb, his elder brother Balabhadra, their sister Subhadra and Sudarsan Chakra.

History is silent about the origin of Sri Jagannath. Even then we collect informations from the Vedas, the Upanishads; ancient epics like the Ramayan, the Mahabharat, various Puranas, and the legends, which bear testimony to the fact that Purusottama Kshetra, the seat of the God of the Universe is a heaven on earth. It has been conceived by the Gods. *Kshetram, Devaitu Kalpitam*. Of all the places of the earth, India is the noblest and of all the States of India, Utkal boasts of the highest renown as the seat of the Sri Jagannath of the universe.

Sri Jagannath in Indian literature :

The worship of Jagannath at Shrikshetra Puri, in Orissa is so old that its history is lost in obscurity. The God has been enshrined in many temples which have perished in course of time before the construction of the present temple. From time immemorial, Puri has been a leading pilgrim centre in India. Roads of pilgrimage carrying millions of devotees

every year have converged towards Puri from different parts of India and abroad since the days of the Vedas and Puranas. On the sacred soil of Orissa, the God has become the most popular God of the Hindu pantheon. Gradually, he has been worshipped as the God of the Universe. Evidences to this effect are found in the *Rig veda*. In a *Sukta* there is reference to Daru which runs thus "Ado yaddaru plavate sindhoh pare apurusam, tada rabhasva durhano tena gaccha parastaram." Sayanacharya has interpreted this *sukta* in the following manner. There exists on sea-shore in a far off place, the image of a deity of the name Purusottama, which is made of wood floating as it were in the sea. O ye, by worshipping that wood indestructible, attain the supreme place of the Vaisnavas. There are other three *Suktas* in the Rig Veda which regard the Daru as the symbol of Brahman.

In post Vedic period, the Upanishads described *Purusa* as the creator of the Universe. The *Swetasvatara Upanishad* and the *Kaivalya Upanishad* give descriptions about *Purusa*. The *Purusa* is one who is not having hands and legs. He has no eyes but sees, no ears but hears. He is unknowable but knows everything. He is the supreme being, Jagannath is the symbol of this *Purusa*.

Chapter XV of the Bhagavad Gita describes the God of the Universe as Purusottama. He who recognizes the God as Purusottama shifts his love from the



entire universe and focusses it wholly and solely on Purusottama.

In the Ramayana, we find description of Jagannath. In the Uttara Khanda of the Valmiki Ramayana, Sri Rama advises Vibhisana to devote himself to the worship of Sri Jagannath, the family deity of the *Ikshvaku Kula* or Surya Vamsa.

Even today, the ritual *Vibhisana Bandapana* is observed in the temple of Shri Jagannath. In the Kiskinda Kanda of the Ramayana, there are references to the names of Sri Jagannath and other deities. Thus in the age of the Ramayana, Sri Jagannath was a popular deity in India.

In the epic Mahabharata, we find the story of Indradyumna and the tank named after him. In this epic, there is description of Vedi, which is identified by the scholars as Antarvedi or the seat of Sri Jagannath. In the Santi Parva of the Mahabharata, we find a reference to Jagannath Dharma.

We also find references about Sri Jagannath and the Purusottama Kshetra in Matsya Purana, Vishnu Purana, Agni Purana, Padma Purana, Narada Purana, Brahma Purana and Skanda Purana. In some famous Sanskrit texts like Kapilasamhita, Tirtha Chintamani, Niladri Mahodaya, Rudrayamala, Tantrayamala, Purusottama Tatwa etc. we find references to Sri Jagannath. The Jagannath Astakam of Adi Sankaracharya is another important text on Jagannath which provides information about the temple of the God. It stands on the top of the Blue Mountain near the sea. Some famous Oriya authors like Sarala Das, Sishu Krishna Das and Jagannath Dash identify Sri Jagannath of Kaliyuga with Srikrishna of Dvapara yuga and try to

prove that Jagannath is no other than God Krishna. The famous poets Balarama, Achyuta, Jasobanta, Ananta, Upendra Bhanja, Baladeva, Dinakrushna, Jadumani have all sang invocations, songs and prayers in honour of Jagannath. Even the poet Salabega, who was a Muslim, was no exception. Thus since the writing of the oldest Vedic verses, we find references to Sri Jagannath.

The visit of spiritual personalities :

Many spiritual personalities have visited Jagannath Temple in the past. Sri Ramanuja, the great Vaishnavite preacher of Visistadwaita philosophy visited Puri in course of his journey from Melukote to Delhi between 1107 to 1117 A.D. and stayed here for sometimes. Under his influence Chodaganga Deva, the king of Orissa became a Param Vaishnava. The present Ramanuja Math has been named after him. His disciple Govinda established the Emar Math, which is the biggest Math of Puri.

Vishnuswami, another famous preacher of Vaishnava Dharma in south India also visited Puri in the second half of the twelfth century and established a Math near the Markandeswar tank, which is called the 'Vishnuswami Math.'

Nimabarka, another famous Vaishnava reformer of south India visited Puri and established a Math of his religious faith. Among the five Maths of his sect at Puri, the Radhaballava Math is well known. It is situated just to the east of the Lion's gate of the Jagannath Temple.

In the last part of the twelfth century, Madhavacharya or Ananda Tirtha, a Vaishnava reformer of south India came



to Puri. The visit of these four famous Vaishnava reformers of south India made Puri the centre of Vaishnavism in India.

Sankaracharya, the greatest Hindu philosopher visited Puri and established the Gobardhana Math. His text "Jagannath Astakam" provides information about the environment of Puri.

Kabir came to Puri and preached harmony between Hinduism and Islamism. He advocated that the God of the Hindus is not different from the God of the Muslims.

After Kabir, came Sri Chaitanya, during the 15th and 16th centuries. He was a great devotee of Sri Jagannath. He spent the last 12 years of his life here at Puri, in a tiny room called Gambhira. He walked on foot to south, Dwarka and Brindavan and convinced people that Sri Jagannath is the supreme deity who can give salvation to man.

William Bruton, an English traveller visited Puri in 1633 and published his account in 1638 on Jagannath Temple. Another foreigner named T. Matto who came to Orissa in 1776 mentions Puri town as the capital of the Gajapati kings of Puri where existed the Jagannath Temple. Thus Sri Jagannath became famous both inside and outside India. The visit of these personalities popularised Jagannath culture both inside and outside India.

The cycle of festivals :

The annual cycle of festivals of Sri Jagannath begins with the *Abhiseka* or the coronation ceremony of the God on full-moon-day in the month of Pausha. It is known as *Pusyabhiseka*.

The *Dola Yatra* is a great festival at

Puri when Madana Mohana, the representative deity of Sri Jagannath is ceremonially installed on a swing and *Abir* is placed on his feet by pilgrims from different parts of India.

Chandan Yatra is another important festival observed at Puri. This festival lasts for 42 days. First 21 days are known as the period of *Bahara Chandan*, because during this period Rama, Krishna, Madana Mohana, Laxmi and Saraswati are taken outside in procession to Narendra tank. There they play in the boat and enjoy different types of worship. The other 21 days are known as the days of *Bhitara Chandan*. During this period, the festival takes place inside the temple. Millions of devotees come to Puri and pay their homage to the God.

On Jyestha Purnima day, the *Snana Jatra* or the Bathing Festival of Sri Jagannath is observed. The main images of Sri Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra along with Sudarsan are brought to the *Snana mandapa* (Chaka) by processions known as *Pahandi* and at about midday 108 pots of water is poured over the deities.

On this occasion, the devotees and pilgrims are allowed to touch and embrace the images. A large congregation of men, women and children from different parts of the country see this festival. After this festival, the four deities go back to the temple in *Pahandi* and remain there in the *Anasara* for 15 days.

On the day of the *Ratha Yatra* the four deities appear before the public on the *Bada Danda* through *Pahandi Bije*. This *Pahandi Bije* is a colourful show.

The deities sit on their respective Rathas and the Rathas travel about



three kilometres. In Gundicha Ghara, they remain for 7 days and come back to the main temple on the 9th day i.e. on the day of Bahuda Dashami. The return festival is known as Bahuda Yatra. The Ratha Yatra is an important part of the cycle of festivals observed for the God. Pilgrims and devotees come to Puri in large numbers from different states of India and also from outside the country to see the festival. They pull the ropes of the Rathas with great enthusiasm and derive celestial joy which cannot be expressed in words.

The Vesa :

The Vesa of Sri Jagannath symbolise various cultural and religious synthesis in the shrine. Since he has been adopted by the tribals and the Aryans of different faiths like Vaishnavism, Jainism, Buddhism, Tantricism, the three images are decorated in various ways in order to satisfy their spiritual aspirations. During *Snana Yatra*, the three images wear the mask of the elephant. This vesa is known as *Hati Vesa*. According to legend. Ganapati Bhata, a devotee from Karnataka came to Puri on the day of *Snana Yatra*, but was disappointed because he could not see the Ganapati image on the bathing platform. To satisfy the sentiment of this devotee, the God appeared in the form of *Gajana*. Since then the *Hati Vesa* of the deities is being observed on the day of *Snana Yatra*. At the time of the termination of the car festival; *Suna Vesa* is observed near the Singhadwara. The images wear huge golden ornaments. Apart from *Hati Vesa* and *Suna Vesa*, 18 other Vesa are

performed inside the temple during a year. *Banabhoji Vesa*, *Kaliya Dalana Vesa*, *Pralambasura Badha Vesa*, *Rama-Balarama Vesa*, *Raja Vesa*, *Rai Damodara Vesa*, *Thiakia Vesa*, *Bankachuda Vesa*, *Padma Vesa*, *Gaja Udhara Vesa*, *Tribikrama Vesa*, *Bamana Vesa*, *Nrusingha Vesa*, *Adakia Vesa*, *Dalikia Vesa*, *Raghunath Vesa*, *Laxmi Narayan Vesa* and *Nagarjuna Vesa* constitute the list.

The great Jagannath Dharma established and enriched in this holy land, is the greatest contribution of Orissa to Indian culture. The Jagannath Dharma preaches equality in the right to worship and discards all distinctions of caste and creed. Everybody can take *Mahaprasad* together. Such universal qualities are found nowhere in India. Sri Jagannath therefore assumes the name of *Patitapabana*. The Hindus, the Buddhists, the Jainas, the Savaras, the Dravidas, all find a harmonious blending of their varying faiths and beliefs in this universal *Dharma* that Sri Jagannath represents. In recent years the fame of Sri Jagannath reached new dimensions touching the land of America, England and other European countries. Therefore Sri Jagannath is called the God of the Universe, thus becoming the spiritual power of different countries of the world.



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A retrospect of Purusottama-Jagannath

● Sri Jagabandhu Padhi

The Skanda Purana in Utkal Khanda speaks about the worship of Nilamadhava by the Savaras (tribal people) dwelling near the south-sea, after installing the image of the deity secretly in a cave on the mountain called Nilachala. The Purana glorifies the mountain and the banyan tree standing over it and at one place agrees that the mountain was named 'Nila' was not actually looking blue as claimed by certain scholars. Nila mountain is found mentioned along with other 'Kula Parvatas' in several Puranas including Bhagavata and Agni. But the reference to the mountain Nila in connection with the shrine of Sri Purushottama, is found only in Skanda, Brahma, Narada and Padma Puranas, although in real state of affairs one would be astonished, when he does not find the trace of any mountain within a radius of about 50 kms. from the seat of Sri Purushottama Jagannath in Puri. Scholars have not failed to associate the famous Tantric deity Kamakhya of Kamrupa (Assam) with the Sakta culture of Orissa and consequent naming of a small sand-hill in this region as Nilachala. We are inclined to quote here Dr. K.C. Panigrahi, who says "Then the Bhaumas came from Assam in the first part of the eighth century A.D., ruled over Orissa, obtained the shrine from the Savaras, got the temple built on the spot and gave it the name Nilachala, which was the name of the famous shrine of Kamakhya in their homeland of Assam." (History of Orissa - Pp. 338-339).

We do not accept the views of Dr. Panigrahi entirely, since he says that the three images carved represented Buddhist Triratna mainly because the Purana speaks of a single image of Nilamadhava, but not of three images. The wooden altar referred to by Dr. Panigrahi takes its origin to the verses of Mahabharata, which Yudhisthira was advised by sage Lomasa to ride upon, hearing from him that goddess Earth had reappeared here in the front of the said altar. The Bhaumakara kings and queens were not Madhava worshippers, but rather worshippers of Buddha and patrons of Tantric system of worship. Dr. Panigrahi himself admits this while dealing with Viraja, the tutelary deity of modern Jajpur, their capital. In his own words - 'The Sakta shrine Viraja was again influenced by Tantrik Buddhism. We have already observed that the Bhaumas had their capital at Viraja and that the earlier rulers of the dynasty were Buddhists, but the Buddhism of this period as already observed, was a mixed form of religion in which Buddhism, Saivism, Saktism and Tantrism had become strangely amalgamated.' (Ibid p.331).

The shrine of Nilamadhava must have had its origin during the Sailodbhava rule of Kangoda, the kings of which dynasty were the acclaimed worshippers of Madhava. The very fact that as many as three rulers of this dynasty bore the name Madhava, is sufficiently suggestive of the origination of Madhava worship in Puri during their rule and at their instance.



In the words of Dr. H.C. Das - 'The epithet of Madhava adopted by the rulers of Sailodbhava dynasty such as Madhavaraja, Madhavarman etc. indicate the popularity of the name Madhava and Madhava worship in Orissa." (Madhava worship and Sri Jagannath - Studies in the cult of Jagannatha P.71). Dr. Dash did not conceive the idea that such popularity could be responsible for establishing a shrine of Madhava by them, especially by Madhavaraja, who compared himself with the greatness of Chakradhara Madhava. The Sailodbhavas, as the name of the dynasty would suggest, were tribals, who lived in the 'Saila' or mountains and their ancestor was one Pulindasena. Pulinda and Savara are synonyms. The Sailodbhavas after establishing the shrine of Madhava, must have entrusted the local Savara chieftain to look after its management and rituals. The name of such a chieftain was Visvavasu, when Vidyapati, the messenger of king Indradyumna arrived in Puri as described in Skanda Purana.

Some Tantric elements must have been introduced in the shrine of Nilamadhava during the Bhauma rule. Besides, a separate shrine for a Tantric goddess called Vimala must have been built during their regime. Establishment of numerous Sakta-Tantric shrines all over their kingdom during the Bhauma period can be suggested from the temples of Viraja at Jajpur, Kapalini and Mohini at Bhubaneswar, Mangala at Kakatpur and may be, at some other parts of Orissa. The earlier rulers of the dynasty were Buddhists and had boldly proclaimed their personal faith in their official charters. By the time Mahayanism in Buddhist order

was quite popular and these Mahayanists encouraged the images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas to be built for the purpose of worship. In the meantime Tantrayana had been introduced in the worship of Mahayana Buddhism, which had given way to such occult doctrines like Sahajayana and Kalachakrayana. Orissa had been a haunting ground of all these 'ism's during the Bhauma rule and it is safe to believe that some of the features of Buddhist Tantras could stealthily enter into the worship of Nilamadhava. It was at this juncture that Sankaracharya visited Puri during the reign of Yayati Keshari, as revealed from Madala Panji. It was his mission to revive the Vedic from of worship to the Indian gods and goddesses eliminating the non-Vedic influence of the Buddhists in the whole of India, for which he had undertaken an extensive tour to all parts of the country. It is in this process that he revived the cult of Vishnu in this holy land. We may believe that Nilamadhava, whatever form he might have assumed in the meantime during the Bhaumakara rule, was renamed as Purusottama and the god continued to bear the same name for a long time. Some scholars presume that the god might have taken the form of Narasingha and might have been installed in a small temple to the north of the banyan tree, which exists even to the date. Several inscriptions incised on the body of the temple not only prove its antiquity, but also the name Purusottama, which the god had assumed at the instance of Sankaracharya.

Skanda Purana however, says that Nrusingha was enshrined on the Nila mountain under an 'aguru' tree, which Indradyumna had visited along with sage Narada, even after the disappearance of



Nilamadhava, suggesting existence of Nilamadhava and Nrusingha simultaneously. The description of Nilamadhava given in Skanda Purana in the mouth of Vidyapati, while narrating his experience before the king is quite suggestive of the iconography of this god. Such description as translated by Dr. G.N. Mohapatra reveals - The sapphire coloured god, the holder of Sankha, Chakra and Gada is lodged on the eastern altar, in the cooling shade of the banyan tree. He sits on a golden lotus, whose size is of eighty-one digits. The lustre of his forehead is brighter than that of the moon in the sky on the eighth day of the fortnight. The beauty of his eyes far excels a blue lotus. His face like the Sun can dispel the three 'Tapa's. The nose of the god can well be compared to the flower 'Tila Puspa'. Although his body is made of stone, a soft smile plays on his lips. The cheeks in the smiling, look very much beautiful. His corners of the mouth are at once beautiful and rightly proportioned. The auspicious radiance flows from his lips that become low when he laughs. The exquisite figure of the god unmistakably bears out the skill of Viswakarma, the carpenter god. The Makarakundala, as his ear-ornament adorns him. A necklace enhances the beauty of his neck. His shoulders are robust and his thighs long. He has four hands. He wears a transparent crystal chain and his chest is ornamented with a gem called 'Kaustubha Mani'. His navel point is very deep and his body grows bright with luxuriant hairs. The chain hangs down to the three fold of the belly (Tribali). The hip chain of valuable gems, together with the Kinkini made of pearls lend beauty to his buttocks. These chains hang down from his buttocks to the thighs. His thighs

resembling pillars grant salvation i.e. Mukti. The god's feet sparkle with a pair of bangles, called 'Balayas'. He remains on the Niladri mountain and wears ornaments like chains, bangles, Keyuras, crown etc. His lotus-like hands embrace Lakshmi, who is seated to his left. She is seen playing the flute and wearing ornaments of all kinds. Her eyes are as beautiful as is the face of 'Bhagavan'. Sudarsana is seen in front of the god, while on his back is seated Garuda, with folded hands (The Land of Vishnu - Pp. 275-76).

Elsewhere in the said Purana too, the iconography of Nilamadhava has been described as seen by the two sinner friends Ambarisa and Pundarika. It is stated, they had darshanas of God, the destroyer of sin, the holder of Sankha, Chakra and Gada. His eyes resembled the lotus and his face was very bright and cheerful. His lotus feet wore slippers, made of gems. He held Laksmi to his left and offered her the petals of Nagaballi flower (Ibid p. 249). (Note - The last sentence is a wrong translation of the original. It should be - accepted the petals of Nagaballi offered by Laksmi.) In both the descriptions as above, Nilamadhava is represented by a standing figure of Vishnu and Laksmi, though there is a small difference in the position of Laksmi as per both the descriptions. In the Anarghara Raghava drama of Murari Misra, the description of Purushottama is given thus - Bhagavan Purusottama, who was being worshipped in the Tamala forest on the shore of salt-sea and who had the image of a big blue-stone (Nilamani) was the consort of Kamala. She was so close to her husband that the figures of leaves drawn on her pitcher-like



breasts with 'Kasuri' were being painted on his (Purusottama's) chests.

Sankaracharya must have seen the image of Nilamadhava as described in Skanda Purana as above, during his visit to Puri. As stated earlier, he might have called the God in the name of Purusottama, which Murari Misra has referred to in his drama. It is certain that Murari survived in Utkala after the visit of Sankaracharya as there is no basic difference in the iconographic features between Nilamadhava of Skanda Purana and Purusottama of Murari Misra. This image of Madhava-Purusottama is stated in the Skanda Purana to have vanished (buried under sand) owing to a heavy cyclone that swept the region between the periods, when Vidyapati saw Nilamadhava and when king Indradyumna visited the holy place. But the image of Nrusingha was very much in existence during the visit of Indradyumna. Sage Narada is stated to have shown Indradyumna the exact spot where the image of Nilamadhava was lying buried.

Madala Panji narrates that king Yayati Keshari had constructed a small temple for Paramesvara (Purusottama - Jagannath) in this holy city and had installed the wooden images therein. The statement may be incorrect, since by that time the image of Purusottama was not made of wood. This Yayati Keshari, may be Yayati-1 of the Somavamsi dynasty. Sri Sankar Vijaya Makaranda, a compilation of all the Sankara Vijaya works and other biographies of Sankaracharya informs us that the great saviour of Hinduism, after defeating the Buddhists had consecrated the wooden images of Purusottama-Jagannath in Purusottama Kshetra or Puri (U.N. Dhal - Purusottama-Jagannath

Kshetra in Puranas - The Puranas and National Integration. P.43). From the genealogy of the Somavamsi rulers prepared by the historians, we come across two Yayatis in the line and the historians differ as to the reigning periods of both Yayatis. Dr. S.N. Rajguru places three kings bearing name Yayati in the geneological table prepared by him. Similarly the date of Sankaracharya (Adi Sankara) is also under controversy. Historians are also not unanimous in their opinion as to which of these Yayatis did really conquer Utkala and become the first king of Utkala as per Madala Panji. Even accepting that Sankaracharya had visited Puri during the reign of any one Yayati of Utkala, there is no probability of the image of Purusottama being made of wood.

According to the Dasgoba Copper plate Inscription of Rajaraja Deva III (1198-1211 A.D.), the first king of Ganga dynasty of Utkala, who has been referred to therein as Gangesvara and who is rightly identified with Chodaganga Deva (1076 - 1147 A.D.) built the present temple of Purusottama-Jagannath, which was lying neglected by the previous kings. In fact there are two verses, which have been included in the panegyric of Chodaganga Deva in all the twelve copper plate inscriptions of the Ganga kings discovered so far. But these two verses are not found in any of the copper plate inscriptions issued by Chodaganga Deva himself.

While the first verse clearly says that, it was Gangesvara, who built the temple of Purusottama, overlooked by the previous kings, the second verse speaks about the happiness experienced by both Purusottama and Laksmi at the



construction of the new temple. We have got two clear indications suggesting completion of the present temple by Chodaganga Deva and consecration of deities in the new temple. The first is 'cakre' in the first verse, which signifies a finite verb in past tense, meaning 'did' or 'accomplished'. The second is the two lines of the second verse. The true and faithful translation of the second verse could be - The ocean is verily, the birth-place of Laksmi. (Since Purusottama had no residence of his own, he had to) stay in the ocean of milk and though (a son-in-law) is honoured in the house of the father-in-law, it was a disgrace to him to stay there permanently. So Purusottama was feeling depressed. (Now on construction of the temple), he was overwhelmed with joy and Laksmi too, while leaving her father's house and residing in her husband's house was greatly pleased for the better prospect she earned.

The clear meaning of the second verse proves beyond doubt that, not only did Chodaganga complete the temple, but he also installed therein the images of Purusottama and Laksmi, which may be no other than the earlier image of Purusottama as described in both Skanda Purana and Anargha Raghava. An assurance given by God Purusottama himself to Indradyumna as mentioned in Skanda Purana to the effect that he would never leave the shrine even in the circumstances of the temple being dilapidated and abandoned, is suggestive of the above interpretation. The views expressed by some scholars saying that Chodaganga also built the present Laksmi temple in the premises of the Jagannath temple, are thus liable to be

discarded. It may be recalled that in Kapila Samhita of a later age, we do not find mention of the separate shrine of goddess Laksmi, although some subsidiary shrines of importance have been described therein. The shrines which have been described in Kapila Samhita within the temple premises include Kalpavata (banyan tree), Bata-mangala (below the tree), Vimala, Kakatirtha (the Rohini Kunda) and Ananta Vasudeva (Purusottama on Ananta serpent). In the said text, Kapila specifically prescribed that while visiting the shrine of Purusottama, one must see the above subsidiary shrines. Had the temple of Laksmi been built there by Chodaganga Deva and had the image of Laksmi been installed therein, it could not have been considered as less important and omitted by the author.

The position of the present temple of Laksmi at the north-western corner reminds us of the temple of Parvati in the great Bhubanesvara (Lingaraja) temple in a similar situation. There is another temple quite adjacent to the former temple, in which a goddess called Gopalini has been installed. Interestingly she is called Bhubanesvari, while Parvati in the said temple complex referred to above is otherwise known as Annapurna. The position is quite comparable to Annapurna in the Visvanath temple of Benaras. The stone inscription now found in the above Parvati temple belongs to the reigning period of Sri Bhanudeva (i.e. Bhanudeva III-1352-1377 A.D.) and has been issued in 1362-63 A.D. by one Bhimavahika for two pots of cake in favour of Umadevi (Parvati). It can therefore be presumed that the present temple of Parvati was erected sometime in the



beginning of the 14th century and this period may also be ascribed to the present Laksmi temple. The temple must have been erected at the instance of some saint of Ramanuja order belonging to Sri Sampradaya as the paintings in its Jagamohan may indicate.

It can also be presumed that the temple of Laksmi was not constructed even at the time of composition of Skanda Purana - Utkala Khanda. In this Purana too, the separate shrine of Laksmi has not been mentioned, although several shrines lying in different parts of the Sankha (Note - Skanda Purana states that the shape of this Kshetra resembles a Sankha - Conch-shell.) have been indicated, Skanda Purana-Utkala khanda was certainly composed by a Vaishnava scholar of Sri-sect, who regarded Subhadra as Laksmi and since that was the religious conception prevalent at that time, hence

no separate shrine for Laksmi was necessary. Subhadra therein has been described as a deity with two hands holding lotus in both of them. Undoubtedly the description confirms to the iconography of Laksmi.

The wooden images of the Trinity must have been installed during the reign of Anangabhima Deva - III (1211-1238 A.D.), whose daughter Candrika or Candra built the present Ananta Vasudeva temple in Ekamra Kshetra. The wooden images of Nilachala Kshetra, were called Daru Brahma, while the stone image of Ekamra were known as Sila Brahma.



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Donate in the HUNDI placed at the Jagamohan of **Shri Jagannath Temple**



Purusottama Jagannatha and Sri Chaitanya

● Pandit Nilambar Nanda

The cosmic functions of creation, preservation and destruction constitute the sport of the Lord. He is the root of all existence, the source and substance of all creatures. He appears in different incarnations in different ages and displays his grandeur and divine majesty. He is called the Purusottama and Jagannatha, the Lord of the universe.

The supreme lord enacts his *leelas* in the mundane world, thereby enabling people to visualize Him and join His sport delightfully. Such spontaneous and cheerful participation in His play is the secret of union with Him. When this is realized, action is performed entirely for His sake. The ancient Vedic seers realized this truth and therefore performed all their individual and social duties as sacrifices on the altar of the Lord. This was known as *yagna*. Gradually ritualism veiled the essence of the divine purpose, giving rise to formal festivals. Time and again, bold speculators came and revealed their visions of truth in different systems of philosophy. Out of the six standard schools of Indian philosophy, is Vedanta as propounded by Vyasaadeva. It is the most perfect system of knowledge, which leads to the realization of God in this very life. The Vedanta *sutras* of Vyasaadeva have been variously interpreted by Acharyas like Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. But all of them have accepted God-realization as the sole object of Vedantic pursuits. The aim of Vedanta is to realize the integral self-consciousness of one's existence, consciousness and bliss. This self-realization clears the veil of ignorance and

leads to the liberation of the immortal soul through union with the Lord.

Vedas, Upanishads, Bramhasutras, Mahabharata, Ramayan, Bhagabat and the *Gita* have described this glory of the Supreme Lord. In *Srimad Bhagabatam*, the powers and skill of Lord Krishna together with His blissful sport have been described exhaustively. By the sixteenth century, the entire country accepted this *Bhagabata* school of religious philosophy as the guideline. *Bhagabata* was accepted as the hand book of religious tenets by all sections of people of the country. The essence of *Bhagabata Dharma* was propagated by different religious teachers including Sri Chaitanya Dev. The entire Sanskrit text was beautifully and lucidly translated by the greatest Oriya Vaishnava saint, Sri Jagannatha Dasa of Puri, who recited it daily in the temple premises of Lord Jagannatha. The scripture, *Bhagabata* has been inspired by a deep and concentrated love for Krishna-Jagannatha.

The *Bhagabata* explains comprehensively all the intricate subjects like the secrets and purposes of creation, the nature of the individual soul, the law of *karma*, the preservation of the world by the Lord. The *leelas* of different incarnations, with particular emphasis on Lord Krishna and His glories. The central teaching of *Bhagabata* is that the 'Lord of lords' alone will bring about the highest welfare of mankind by eliminating all miseries of the entire humanity, with a view to establish lasting peace, harmony, brotherhood and equality among different races through



unalloyed devotion to the Lord. This philosophy teaches man about His relationship with God, the duty of man and the prospect of attaining love and joy through devotion to the Lord. This intense love for the Lord has been fully practiced and perfectly attained by devotees in four important spiritual centres of India namely, (1) Bithalanatha of Maharashtra, (2) Ranganatha of Mysore, (3) Tirupatinatha of Andhra Pradesh and (4) Jagannatha of Puri, besides numerous other temples and holy shrines in India.

A true devotee of the Lord does not hanker after worldly pleasures of the lower self, enjoyed through senses, as he derives the highest bliss in life, by contact and communion with the Supreme Lord of all delights. This is known as 'Life Divine'. Through such intense devotion to God, a devotee is freed from all distresses and he easily scores victory over the vices such as greed, vanity, hatred and fear permanently. The Bhakta has no ego; he is modest in respecting all and is compassionate towards the whole world, feeling God's presence everywhere. He sees his adorable Lord-Vasudeva in himself and around him, in all beings, in insects as well as plants. He loves and serves them all, like the dearest 'tulsi' tree, the favourite of all Vaishnavas, In a nutshell, this Bhagabata Dharma brings about the steadfast union of man with God, through love alone, which integrates all other virtues of self-perfection like selfless 'Karma' and the spreading of spiritual knowledge for removing all worldly fears.

Fortunately, this perfect socio-political religious culture of India was established by the Lord Himself in Orissa. Due to the august and benign presence of Lord Jagannatha, who is the incarnation of the supreme consciousness, this perfect culture

manifested itself at Puri. This truth has been proclaimed loudly by all the great spiritual teachers such as Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Tulsidasa, Kavir, Nanak, Chaitanya, Jagannatha Dasa and Salabega. The utopian concepts of socio-political and religious perfections of life propagated by the Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle remained in their philosophical teachings only. But the Supreme Lord Jagannatha, out of His infinite mercy and compassion towards His children, revealed this perfect culture to the ancient temporal leaders of the country, like the great king Indradyumna of Orissa. The great saintly king Indradyumna discovered the secret of all secrets, the panacea to all problems of the mankind and attained supreme bliss in his own life, by surrendering to Lord Jagannatha. He declared that all are saved by a mere glimpse of His graceful countenance. This intensity of faith and profoundity of love transcends time, religions, caste and race. This knowledge of the Supreme has been permanently introduced and idolized in the cult of Jagannatha, yet it baffles idolatry. Brotherhood, sisterhood, motherhood and love are permanently attained, where there is no narrowness of caste, creed and colour. Wealth and power are of no consequence before the eternal glory of the supreme lover. The real wealth, the most precious possession of all hearts, is a view of the adorable Lord and the feast and ecstasy of millions of souls for all times. This realization is open to all races. Self-realization through this path brings eternal youth to the entire mankind, who are otherwise decaying with fear and ignorance, till the discovery of the highest self-perfection, called Purusottama of the Universe.

The sublime attraction of



Purusottama is like the pure water of Mother Ganges, which purifies and sanctifies everything. With a gold-handled broom, the spiritual successor and progeny of Indradyumna publicly demonstrates this truth of cleaning the hearts of the millions of people, through intense love for God, and by repeating the act of cleaning and sweeping the chariots of the deities every year in the public view of millions of devotees. Saints and sinners are delivered equally by the Lord during the Car festival. One wonders at the grandeur of the supreme consciousness of Lord Jagannatha during this festival. This has been realised by the saints like Nimai (Chaitanya) of the past and Nimai Harichandan of the present age.

In the sixteenth century, Chaitanya propagated this cult for long eighteen years till his miraculous disappearance. His love for Lord Jagannatha was the essence of his ecstatic union with the supreme consciousness. It is traceable in the tenth canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, particularly in "Gopi-Gita", "Bhramar Gita", and "Mahisi Gita". The earthly sports of Sri Radha, revealed in Vrindavan, during the advent of Srikrishna, was again revived as the power of Allahadini in Chaitanya. Sri Chaitanya assumed the role of a world teacher and therefore he appeared as Krishna-Chaitanya to the outsiders, while retaining his internal-potency of 'Allahadini' at the time of adorning Lord Jagannatha as Srikrishna. Unique indeed was another spiritual contemporary, the famous Vyasa of Orissa, Sri Jagannatha Dasa Goswami, who also propounded this culture. He thought himself to be Radha and represented perfect bridal devotion for 'Krishna-Jagannatha'. Both Sri Chaitanya and Sri Jagannatha Dasa represent the consummation of intense love

for Srikrishna. Such consummate love for Krishna was possible in Vrindavan and it again appeared in Nilachala due to the advent of the same Srikrishna, as Lord Jagannatha. Thus, experience of this consciousness of God, in its intense form, is the perfection of self-delight of the unalloyed souls, like Sri Chaitanya and Sri Jagannatha Dasa. In fact, the Lord has manifested himself in countless forms, for revealing His playful self-delight. Such Delight-Incarnate, is therefore called, Jagadananda Kanda. Like Gopis, there are many such associates of Lord Jagannath, engaged in the various services of the temple.

This super human relationship with Lord is not accessible to ordinary mind. However, this system of philosophy is known as Achintya Bhedabheda Cult.

*Vrindvanam parityajya
Padamekham na gachhati*

This eternal love-consciousness of the supreme is open to all and closed to none. The followers of the Lord can attain self-delight in their present lives. Gopabandhu Das once said, "Anywhere in India, I am in Nilachala." The essence of this realization is that the outer self may move anywhere, but the inward reality remains unmoved.

Purusottama is perfect in all respects. He comes out twice a year, to meet people. Real seekers are indeed very particular to have *Darshanas* and come in close contact with their dearest Lord on such special occasions. In fact, He extends special invitations contained in the utterances of realized saints and sages -

*Ratharudho gachhan pathi milita.
Rathetu Bamanam drustwa, Punar-janma na vidyate.*

There is no rebirth after this vision and



realization. Verily, we see this perfection in millions once a year. This resembles the scene of Srikrishna and Arjuna in one chariot, face to face in the battle of life, for the victory of the Divine-Power. Blessed are those who avail of such unique opportunity, granted to one and all so gracefully by the kind and compassionate Lord.

Purusottama - *leela* revealed its profound mellowness during the stay of Lord Chaitanya at Puri. During this period, the hearts of millions were flooded with passionate love for the Lord. He adopted an unprecedented method of display of God's love through the medium of *kirtan* and ecstatic dances in houses, roads, streets and temples, travelling groups and settled *sankirtan* monasteries. Such powerful contact with God through recitation of His holy-name became universally popular, as the easiest path of God-realization for the common people irrespective of their age or education. This is Chaitanya's greatest gift to the whole world. Such a transcendent soul is not affected by Maya. This cult is powerfully depicted in the deities : Balabhadra representing Sivahood, Subhadra representing Radha, Krishna manifest in Lord Jagannatha and Sudarshan representing the 'Turiya' state of *samadhi*. This is called Abheda stage in the 'Achintya-Bhedabheda' doctrine. Generally, *sadhakas* realize the consciousness of *sankhya-yoga* and monistic Vedanta in their lives. But this Adwaya Tatwa is realized through saturation of intense love of Lord. One who dives deep enjoys it in the unfathomable recess of his self-delight. This fierce pursuit is still continuing for more than five hundred years in India and abroad, even after the so-called disappearance of Lord Chaitanya, who appears eternally in Lord Jagannatha. Therefore, it is said that the *leela* of

Gouranga is eternal.

Time has come when the most ignorant self, groping in darkness will be fully benefitted by this Supreme Light, not through the pursuit of science, but through the compassion of the Lord. In spite of the governance of the law of *karma*, this freedom and bliss of the self can be realized by devotees of Lord through intense faith in the Lord. All can attain this self-culture in an age of objective westernized education, which insists on utilization of material resources. Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Satya Sai Baba in India have again illuminated this path in the modern age. They have boldly declared that the problems of 'Economics' should not be approached separately but integrally with the force of the 'spirit' in man, Reforms will evidently follow to revive this grand perfection attained in the past through the four-fold self-development in *dharma*, *artha*, *karma* and *mokshya*. If one cannot acquire this self-culture in the universities, he is not lost as the Supreme Saviour saves millions of such souls by His beautiful and charming looks. Upendra Bhanja, the poet has sung. "Here sits the supreme king of the universe to distribute the highest four fold self perfection, freely to all, without any reservations." Coming to the forces of spiritual reforms of the society in India, the cosmic-consciousness of brotherhood of mankind is only possible through 'divine-life.' This has been experienced by the seers in all ages. This culture has reached its settled perfection in the seat of Jagannatha providing the real foundation of unity in the solidarity of Dharma, which rests eternally in Lord Jagannatha.

Every reform has inspired the inner awakening of human consciousness to a supreme wisdom and then to rise to that



state or highest level of sublimity. A servitor or participant in his sport experiences the divine bliss. Most of these experiences are built on the edifice of deep devotion, not accessible to empirical pursuits. This is experienced through performance of nine kinds of Bhakti, directly offered to Lord Jagannatha through hearing, chanting, remembering, serving, worshipping, dealing like friends and finally surrendering one's self to the Supreme lover, Sri Jagannatha.

Jagannatha is the sole subject (*vishaya*) of delight of the living beings, who in their turn, are the objects of this delight (*ashraya*). When they join, there flows a *Rasa* which is extremely delightful. Lord Jagannatha combines in Himself an all round love for the powers of beauty and benevolence. He is called the supreme source or fountain of all incarnations. Hence the realization of Purusottama - consciousness actually starts where Srikrishna's teaching '*Mamekam Saranam Braja*' ends in the *Gita*. This shelter is extended through out-stretched hands to embrace all on earth. Now that automobiles, railways and airways have removed the gap of distance between places, all can easily participate in the eternal *leelas* of Lord Jagannatha on various occasions throughout the year, which are *ganayatras* or mass-festivals. The supreme lover's regard for his devotees even excels the regard of the 'Sadhakas' towards their Lord, as he is the master, who excels all others in all respects. So he declares : 'Neither the holy shrines, nor the images of clay and stone are competent enough to sanctify us so quickly as you saints and absolute -

realised souls do by giving your *Darshan'* (Bhagabata, x-84-10-11). Incidents of such exaltation of devotees by Lord Jagannatha are found in the legends of Raghu Arakshita, Bandhu Mohanty, Dasia Bauri, Salabega, Balarama Dasa and Nimai Harichandan of the present age.

In short, this Jagannatha-consciousness is the goal of man. As a manifestation of this infinite blessedness, the Supreme Lord appears as a 'person', the Purusottama. He conducts Himself as such with all men and women, who flock around Him, like bees around the lotus. Let us blend this charming *rasa of madhurya* in our self-consciousness so that we can meet Him freely and enjoy His beauty, power and love throughout our lives like the famous poet Jayadeva, who sang His glory in ecstasy. The *bhavas* like *dasya, sakhya, batshalya* turn into the a passionate, *madhurya*, enthusing love-consciousness nurtured under the harmonious patronage of all the devotees. Let us bow to that 'Sangha Sakti', which is automatically organized during the *leelas* of Purusottama, already displayed by Shankara, Nanaka, Chaitanya, Jagannatha Dasa and all other saints. Let us pray to Lord Jagannatha to grant his *Prema-rasa* and his blessings for serving His lotus feet at Purusottama Dhama, His permanent abode on the earth, life after life.



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ICONOGRAPHY OF JAGANNATH

● Janmejay Choudhury

Orissa is called Bhagabat Desh and Puri is called the Purusottam Kshetra or in brief Purustam. Orissa is therefore, called the land of Purusottam or Jagannath Desh. History does not speak of any other state in the world whose sovereign is the Lord of the Universe save that of Orissa. Purushottam Kshetra has assumed prominence gradually. It had enjoyed a hoary antiquity in tradition; in the apurusa daru of Rig Veda, Atharva Veda and in many other ancient texts. By seventh century Bhagavan Purusottam had appeared in Kailan copper plate inscription and by eighth century Jagannath found place in Jnanasidhi of Indrabuti, king of Uddiyana. The Anargha Raghava of Murari Misra (9th century), Trikandasesa of Purusottam Deva (9th century) mentioned Jagannath. Similarly Matsya Purana (400-1250 A.D.), Skanda Purana (700-1300 A.D.), Agni Purana (900 A.D.), Brahma Purana (900-1500), Padma Purana (950-1400 A.D.), Kalika Purana (11th century), Ratnamala of Satananda (11th century) mentioned variously about Purushottam Kshetra/ Nilagiri/Darumurti/Balabhadra/Jagannath etc. The Kalidindi grant (1031 A.D.) of Chalukya king Rajaraj and the inscription of Kalchuri king Gopal Dev at the Boran Deo temple (1033 A.D.) also mentioned about Purushottam Deva and Purushottam Kshetra.

Rig veda has a reference to Daru in one Sukta (X.155.3) and also to the deity of Purushottam on the sea-coast. In

Atharva Veda we know about Daru and sea-shore (Paippalada Samhita, VI 8.7.). In Purushottam Tattwa (Jiv. 11, 563), Raghunandan explains the verse from both Rigveda and Atharva Veda with reference to Purushottam Jagannath of Puri.

Lord Jagannath is known as Purusottam and is made of Daru (Log of sacred wood). According to Sayana, there are three Suktas in Rigveda which indicate that Daru was regarded as the symbol of Brahman. "The immutable aspect of Brahma as different from the mutable aspect is compared with a tree containing many branches which in its aspects of unity is the absolute, the motionless and the eternal one." Sayana suggests by interpreting these Suktas that the tree which is the most ancient and imperishable is Brahman himself. On the basis of Sayana conception, Brahma can be symbolised as a tree and the Pranava is the symbol of Brahman. The four Mantras of Pranava may correspond to the four Padas of Brahman and the four forms were carved to translate Brahman worship into Pranava worship. The Pranava worship later took the Tantric form and subsequently the Puranic form and in this way the worship of Daru Brahman and Pranava have been transformed into the worship of Balabhadra, Subhadra, Jagannath and Sudarshan. This constitutes the basic tradition of the worship of Jagannath, the Daru Brahman. The Swetaswatar Upanisad and the Kaivalya Upanisad



describe Purusa, the creator of the universe, (the Brahman) as one who possesses neither hands nor legs, who has no eyes but sees everything, no ears but hears all and who though unknowable knows everything. This description of Purusa explains the peculiarity of the form of Purushottam of Puri. The Niladrimahodaya enumerates the seven fold images of Purushottam Jagannath as Sri, Pusti, Bhu, Madhava, Chakra, Chakri, Avanibrut (Ananta-Balabhadra), Bhdra (Subhadra) and describes the colour of Jagannath as sky-blue and of Balabhadra white, with two of their four hands concealed. The colour of Subhadra is yellow with no visible hands being stretched down. Sudarshan is described as having pillar shape and Jitendriya (controller of senses). The Lord, in company of other three deities remains central to all faiths, rituals and activities in his mysterious forms and symbols through the ages. The Daru form continue to exist since its very inception and neither metal nor stone could replace the content of the form. Some scholars like Pandit Nailakantha Das etc. say that the three images collectively stand for the Jaina trinity of Samyak Jnana, Samyak Charitra and Samyak Drusti. Dr. H.K. Mohtab and others say that the three images in Puri temple are of Buddhist origin representing Jagannath as Buddha, Subhadra as Dharma (as Dharma in Buddhism is believed to be a female) and Balabhadra as Sangh (monastic order where the relationship between monks and nuns is designed as that of brother and sister).

Lord Jagannath is the confluence of all religions. All literatures refer to three names in their text - Indradyumna, Viswavasu (the son of Jara Savara) and

Viswakarma connected with Lord Jagannath. There are various legends associated with these celebrated names. Sarala Das's (15th century A.D.) Mahabharata, Nilamber Das's Deulatola, Kanhei Khuntia's Mahabhava Prakasa, Sanatan Goswami's Bruhat-Bhagavatamruta, Sisukrushna Das's Deulatola, Jagannath Das's Darubrahmagita, etc. have identified the Daru with the half brunt body of Lord Srikrishna and established the uninterrupted connection of Jagannath of Kaliyuga with Krushna of Dwapar Yuga in the line of Vishnu Purana.

But the images of the Lord are made of Nima Daru (Neem wood). Bhabhisya Purana says that Nimba wood is the most auspicious material for making the images of Vishnu. Neem is auspicious for all castes and the sight of other wood is not auspicious for all. Even sandal wood is not auspicious for Kshatriyas and Sudras. According to Vaikhanasagama, Neem is a male variety, and therefore, it is suitable for Vishnu. The Bruhat-Samhita says that if Lord is worshiped in the form of Daru, all the four aspirations of man - namely Ayu (longevity), Sri (wealth), Vala (Strength) and Jaya (victory) are fulfilled, but on worship of the Lord in other metals or materials men may get one or two of these benefits. Kasyapasilpa, Vishnu Samhita etc. confirm this argument. The images are Chalachala (movable immovable) as they go out of the Ratnavedi only twice a year - during Snana Yatra and Ratha Yatra. The eyes of the Lord Jagannath are round and called Chakadola, whereas the eyes of Balabhadra and Subhadra are like human eyes. The concept of Chakadola comes from the description that the eyes of



Vishnu are like the Sun and Moon. The roundness and circular shape depicts the limitlessness. Similarly, the fingers and legs are concealed, which indicate that He can catch with invisible hands and move unseen. There are no eye brows which explain the expansiveness of his round eyes to infinity. The Lord is in all embracing and welcoming posture. That is the climax of his grace and symbol of his love.

The image of Lord Jagannath, the Chakradhari is made according to Chakrayantra. The wood used for making the image should be divided into two parts having 14 Bhagas (8 parts) above and 18 Bhagas below, while the Jamyabhaga (central portion) shall be 10 1/2 Pavas (one Pava is about an inch). Each of the lotus feet is 15- 10/16 Pavas and the remaining 14 Bhagas consisting of 50- 12/16 Pavas make 84 Pavas in height. Lord Jagannath is 84 Pavas in height. Both the arms are divided into 12 Bhagas each and the concealed portion of the arm is 28 Pavas. The side arm which is visible is of 8 Pavas, the portion of the nose 1/10 of the side arms (i.e. 8/10 Pavas) and the lower portion of the nose is 12 Pavas. The circumference of the face is 30 Pavas. At the heart portion 4 Pavas are left to instal the Brahman. The image of Balabhadra is based on Sankhayantra. The colour or Balabhadra is that of Sankha (conch shell), namely white. The image of Balabhadra is of 85 Pavas in height. The wood is divided into 32 Bhagas (parts), face covers 31 Pavas, upper portion of the face 5, shoulders 11, heart 9, central portion of heart for Brahman 10, lower

portion 18, each arm 24, two Phalas (sections) shining above the shoulders 2 each, nose 1/2. Each arm and area of the face 21, above portion above the nose 18, below the nose 8, forehead, the head portion 5 Pavas. The image of Subhadra is based on Padmayantra and the colour is yellow it rises up to 52 Pavas. The face is 17 Pavas, the area of the face 15, central portion 12, lotus feet which are concealed 17, each arm which is concealed 15 and the side arm 17. The arms raised upward are joined with the hip. The image of Sudarshan is based on Gudaa Yantra and its height is 84 Pavas with a circumference of 21 Pavas.

From the beginning of Ganga rule the shrine of Jagannath had became famous, Yayati 1 (885-925 A.D.) of Somavamsi dynasty and Chodaganga Deva (1077-1147 A.D.) had built the magnificent temple in the shrine which gradually became famous as a great religious centre. The political condition of India in 12th century after Turkish invasion also enhanced its sacredness. The cult of Lord Jagannath not only influenced Orissa but also the Buddhist people of Java, Bali, Siam, Burma, where the term Srikshtera was used and stories of similar nature were in circulation. However, the images worshipped today have enjoyed continuity of tradition and permanence.



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The Iconography of Hindu Temple : Idea and Image

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All religions have their sacred places, places of worship. Temple, means a building for religious exercises and is a centre for worship. It is the abode of God who is the spirit immanent in the universe. The temple, therefore is known by such terms as devalaya, Shivalaya and devayatana. Hence, worship constituting the living use of the temple, starts with the installation of life in the form of deity in the sanctum. The temple is mainly a product of Puranic tradition. Temples does not seem to have existed during the Vedic age. The practice of preparing images of the deities mentioned in the Vedic hymns might have come in vogue by the end of the Vedic period. The view that the *Yangasala* of the Vedic period gradually got metamorphosed into temples by the epic period owing to the influence of the cults of devotion is widely accepted. The temple is mainly a product of and instrument of the Puranic tradition. Hindu myths, legends and beliefs are compiled in texts collectively called the Puranas. The Hindu pantheon of Gods originated from the texts of two Brahminical sects, the Vaisnava and Saiva, which with other minor religious systems are part of the puranic tradition and is known as Hinduism.

The puranic tradition evolved out of a synthesis of the sanskritic (Main), tradition and the regional or vernacular (little) traditions. This process of synthesis

and assimilation is called Sanskritisation or the process of acculturation through the interaction between Brahmanical forms of worship and the local regional or vernacular forms of beliefs and practices or folk traditions. Despite the continuous process of acculturation and synthesis of these two traditions, folk/tribal forms persist in many ways first, as part of the mainstream religious systems in their pantheons and rituals and more importantly, as cult practices in private and public ceremonial worship and festivals independent of the Brahminical temple with their own non-Brahman priests and non-Brahminical rituals. In almost every settlement, rural or urban this duality is conspicuously present in the places of worship in major temples of puranic deities and in smaller cults of the local deities.

There are many ancient texts laying down the formal architectural styles prevalent in various regions and the comprehensive text is called the *Vastu Sastra*. *Vastu Sastras* has its sources in the *Sastras*, *Puranas* and *Agamas*, besides *trantric* literature and the *Brihat Samhita*. All of them, agree on the point that basically the temple styles can be divided into *nagara*, *dravida* and *vesara*. They are respectively the square, octagon and the apes or circle in their plan. An inscription as referred by R.D. Banarjee, found in the temple of Amritesvara at



Holal (Dist. Bellary, Karnataka), mentioned that four classes of temples i.e. Nagara, Dravida, Kalinga and Vessara exist in India. Scholars opined that Kalinga type, chiefly found in Orissa is a sub-class by itself from Nagara group. However, the manifestation of Orissan architecture was labelled as the Kalingan style after the territory where temples are found. The distinctiveness of the Kalingan style of architecture was amply attested to by the epigraphical and literary references of its own Silpa Sastras like Bhuvana-Pradipa, Silpasarini and Silparatnakosa. They mentioned about three types of temples namely the Rekha, Pidha (Bhadra) and Khakra. The Rekha and Pidha temples forms two component parts one architectural scheme, the former was represented by sanctum with curvilinear spire and the latter was represented by porch having pyramidal roof. These two type were meant for the worship of Siva and Vishnu and other deities except Matrika or Sakta deities. The Khakara order was noted by semicylindrical roof and meant for Sakti worship. The Orissan Temple is remarkable for its plan and elevation. On plan, the general scheme of early temples comprised the sanctum (Deul) and the frontal porch (Jagamohan), but later on two more components added to them were Natamandap (Dancing Hall) and Bhogamandapa (Hall of offering). Thus all components were in one axis. On plan, sanctum is tri-ratha, in earlier example, but in course of time, they became pancharatha, saptaratha and navaratha. The projections are called, the raha (central projection), the anuraha and kanika etc. On elevation, both the

sanctum and the porch could be divided into three parts along the vertical plan, viz, bada, gandi and mastaka. The gandi is decorated with angasikharas, mastaka was the crowning part of the temple architecture.

In the iconographic scheme, the walls of the shrine are divided into three vertical segments with a large niche in the centre of each wall housing a parsvadevata. In a Siva temple, these niches house the images of Parvati and her two sons Ganesh and Kartikeya ; in a Vishnu Temple we find the three forms of Vishnu ; in a devi Temple there forms of the goddess. The parsvadevata niche is flanked by smaller niches containing the relief statues of the deity to whom the temple is dedicated. The Gupta formula of introducing the figures of the river Goddesses Ganga and Yamuna on the doorjambs of the shrine was invariably followed.

In this back ground, let us discuss the iconographic features of the Jagannath Temple. The temple, representing the microcosm - the cosmic man, is structured in the likeness of man, the microcosm. Thus the parts of the temple are designed to correspond with the human body from foot to head. Since the archetypal Purusa is perceived through his manifestation as the universe, when the one becomes two and then a multiplicity of created beings, the temple is conceived as the divine couple tellingly described as the groom and the bride "Vimana Varasresthan ca Kanya Ca Mukhasala" (Silpa Prakash). This emergence of the divine essence and the Sakti for releasing the generating forces



of the universe is one of the basic concepts of Orissan temple.

Every temple has the 'achala' or the permanent image, in the shrine and the other gods of the pantheon as well as subsidiary deities in the niches, and semidevine, celestial beings in various parts of the structure. The 'chala' or mobile images made of bronze are used for various ritual and ceremonial purposes, particularly processions, during festivals. Bronze casting of images, on a large scale, from the early medieval times, heralded a period of ritual consolidation and artistic standardisation, and simultaneously of an imaginative variation of treatment of even well-known religious themes and legends. But, here at Jagannath Temple we have 'calacala' (both movable and immovable) deity, of course the cala (movable) images are separately reserved for other occasions. Here, the main deities are kept and worshipped in the garbhagriha, is also taken out on the ratha (chariot) during the Rathayatra which comes in the category 'calachala'.

Here, the deities Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath worshipped in iconic form still the iconography is very complex as it assimilate the features of Vaishnavism, Saivism and Saktism. However, scholars extended their opinion on the basis of Mora well inscription (Mathura) of 1st AD which says that the "Pancavira" cult led by the Abhira tribe were worshipping of Gopal Krishna, Vasudeva Krishna alongwith Subhadra the younger sister of Gopal Krishna. The south Indian tradition also knew of Subhadra as younger sister of

Gopal Krishna. The Brahat-Samhita of Varahamihira (Gupta period) provides that Ekanamsa the younger sister of vasudeva Krishna should be placed between Baladeva and Krishna. The first trio in south India showing Balaram on the right, Subhadra in the centre and Vasudeva-Krishna on the left, is found in the Pallava bas relief at Mamallapuram. There are three panel found in the Mathura Museum datable to Kushan period also depicts Balarama, Subhadra and Vasudeva. Again a trio panel comes from Devangarh in Gaya District of Bihar presently housed in Patna Museum shows Balarama, Devi subhadra and Vasudeva-Krishna. Another post Gupta panel housed in the State Museum, Lucknow (No. G. 58) also shows three images, Balarama, Subhadra and Vasudeva Krishna. The Orissan panel of 13th century depicted in Konark temple slightly differs with representations of Siva Linga, Jagannath and Durga perhaps meant for the equal status given to three major religious streams of contemporary period. Again the representation of Jagannath image in the Rajivlochan temple of Rajim towards 15th century A.D. concludes independent image of Jagannath cult of Vaishnavite nature. Here, we may conclude the great pan-Indian character of Vaisnava nature assimilate at Puri and gave birth the Jagannath cult.

Similarly, in the temple iconography also the major parsva devatas are found life size independent images of Varaha, Narsimha and Trivikrama on three cardinal directories of South West and North respectively. These three images separately represented, are more common in Vaisnava religious



establishments. These images are placed in conformity with the iconographic features of Silpa ratna, Agnipurana, Vishnudhramottara, Rupamandana and Matsyapurana.

The representation of Dikapalas or Lokpalas in the corners of Khakaramundis of lower Jangha of Jagannath temple are Indra, Yama, Kubera, Agni, Nritti, Vayu and Isana. Although depiction of Dikapalas are in vogue in the earlier temples of Orissa but it was prominent in Mukteswara and Rajarani Temple, than all the later temples have the representative Dikapalas which was considered guardians of the quarters over which they have respective jurisdiction. Here, systematically we find Indra (mutilated) in the East, Yama in South, Varuna in West and Kubera in North. Agni, Nritti, Vayu and Isana are respectively on South-East, South-West, North-West and North-East. These are recognised as Vedic/Puranik deities and some of them being more important than the other. The Vishnudharmottara and Brihat Samhita gives the description of these Dikapalas. Here, in the Jagannath Temple all the Dikapalas with their respective quarters, weapons and vehicles are found in order. Here, it is interesting to mention the image of Nritti, The Lord of South-West, found placed on the niches of lower Jhanga, of Jagannath Temples. The image is seated on a body of a man. Nritti, the Vedic deity like Yama, Agni and Indra is said to be the wife of Virupaksha. Virupaksha is Kala and Nritti is murtyu as described in Vishnudharmottars. Sculptures showing Nritti is extremely rare and as part of iconographic programme of a full fledged temple we have the beautiful image of

Nirtti in the outer of wall of the main temple.

The most remarkable feature of the Jagannath Temple is the representation of twenty four forms of Vishnu in the outer wall on both sides of each parsva devata shrines. These twenty four manifestations are alike in their iconographic features. They are all standing images with noband in the body possessing four arms and adorns with Krita crown and other usual ornaments, each one of them stands upon a padmasana. The difference between any two of these images has to be made out of the way in which the Sankha (Conch), the Chakra (Wheel), the Gada (Mace) and the Padma (Lotus) are found distributed among their four hands. The 'Rupamananda' furnishes the twenty four - names of Vishnu which and the corresponding arrangements of the four ayudhas in the four hands in each case. It is worthy to note that the number of possible permutations of four things taken four at a time is exactly twenty-four. These twenty four forms of Vishnu which have been listed in 'Rupamananda' and Padmapurana are found nowhere in any temple sculpture except in this Jagannath temple otherwise signifies the visnavite origin of the temple.

The next important depiction is the ten avatars of Vishnu in the upper jangha of the Jagannath Temple. They are of course not found in order, but clear and good shape is marked in South-East corner, Varaha and Narasimha, in the South-West corner, Balarama and North-West corner found Buddha and Kalki. The avatara representation is another iconographic feature of Vishnavite temple.



The reference of the Avatara of Vishnu found in Bhagabat Gita, Pancharatra texts, Mahabharat, Bhagavat Purana, Varaha and Agnipuranas. However, inclusion of Buddha as avatara of Vishnu is found in Varha and Agnipuranas and Bhagavat Purana. The representation of ten Avatars in a standardised form and its reflection in Jayadeva's Gitagovinda confirms the iconography of vaisnavite temple.

The admixture of pancharatra with Vasudeva Narayana-Krishna also depicted in the temple walls.

Thus Hinduism is a more recent nomenclature given to a conglomeration of heterogeneous traditions and plurality of beliefs and worship with a long history of development from the Vedic religion through the worship of epic and Puranic Gods and personnel deities, cults and sects, as well as philosophical systems rather than to a monolithic tradition or a structure based on a single beliefs and worship or a single text scripture. The temple, in more than one sense, represents the multiple facets and complex process of this development through its architecture, sculpture, iconography, rituals and institutional organisation - it is like a text which has to be read and understood in the various contexts of its evolution into a monument of enduring value.



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GODDESS LAKSMI

● Sri Durga Prasad Mohapatra

The Goddess Sri Laksmi does not appear in the earliest Vedic literature. The term 'Sri', however, does occur quite often in the Vedas and it is clear that the meanings of the term are related to the nature of the latter goddess Sri Laksmi. As used in the Vedic hymns, the term Sri suggests capability, power and advantageous skills. As an external quality, Sri suggests beauty, lustre, glory and high rank. Sri also refers to riches, prosperity and abundance in general. In short, Sri refers to most auspicious qualities and suggests general wellbeing in terms of physical health, material prosperity ; bodily beauty and ruling majesty.

The most detailed picture of Sri Laksmi in Vedic literature is found in the "Sri Sukta", a hymn in praise of Sri which is the part of an appendix to the "Rug Veda" and which is probably pre-Buddhist in date. Perhaps this is surely one of the earliest hymns to Sri and associates her with certain symbols and qualities that persist throughout her history in the Hindu tradition. An important feature of Sri in this hymn is her association with fertility, a feature that was not significantly emphasized in earlier usages of the term Sri in Vedic literature.

The hymn to Sri mentions two objects that come to be consistently associated with Sri throughout her history, i.e, the

lotus and the elephants. She is seated on a lotus, bears the colour of lotus, appears like a lotus, is covered with lotuses and wears a garland of lotuses. As per her history, in fact Sri Laksmi is often called Padma and Kamala. The popularity of the lotus in Indian art and in conography, both Buddhist and Hindu, suggests a complex and multivalent meaning associated with the lotus. Images of Sri Laksmi with elephants are probably meant to portray the act of royal consecration. The central ritual action of the Vedic royal consecration ceremony, i.e, the "Rajsuya" was the "Abhisheka" ritual in which the king was consecrated by bathing in auspicious waters poured over him to bestow authority and vigour on him. In so far as the elephants in these images of Laksmi is concerned, it may be learnt to be portraying the "Abhisheka" by this they bestow the qualities of fertility and royal authority on Laksmi herself who is the source of these very qualities. The elephants further more shown standing on lotuses. A more highly charged image denoting the increase of royal authority, fertility and vigour would be different to imagine.

As per the versions of the myth, when the milk ocean was churned by the Gods and Demons, Goddess Laksmi appeared from the churning and most variants of the myth say that Sri Laksmi's association



with Vishnu took place at the churning of the ocean. The relationship of Sri and Vishnu seems appropriate in the context of the myth and at a general symbolic level in several ways. As per "Vishnu Puran", "Sri Vishnu" or Hari descends on the world in various shapes. So does his consort Sri. Thus when Hari was born as a dwarf, as a son of Aditi, Laksmi also appeared from a lotus. When Hari was Raghava, Laksmi was born as Sita and when Hari was Srikrishna, Laskmi was Rukmani. In the other descents of Vishnu, she is his associate. If he takes a celestial form, she appears as divine. If a mortal, she becomes mortal too, transforming her own person agreeably to whatever character it pleases Vishnu to put on. Her role as a model wife typifies her more subdued nature. She is occupied in this role with household order. Indeed she is said to cook food at the Jagannath temple which

come to be known as "Mahaprasad". In her role as ideal wife, she exemplifies the orderliness of human society and human relations.

Reflecting her increasing association with social order, several texts locate Laksmi's presence in righteous behaviour, orderly conduct and correct social observance. She is said for example to live with those who tell the truth and are generous. She dwells with those who have clean bodies and are well dressed. In the "Mahabharat" she says that I dwell in truth, gift, vow, austerity, strength and virtue. Orderly social relations and traditional social virtues attract Sri Laksmi herself a model of social decorum as Vishnu's wife.



District Treasury, Puri





Anthropomorphism in the culture of Lord Jagannath

● Dr. Balaram Das

The holy land of Orissa belongs to numerous Gods and Goddesses. Since time immemorial many a folk deity are worshipped in addition to the Vedic and Puranic ones. But the prominent deity among them in Orissa is Lord Shri Jagannath. In the Psyche of the Oriya nation Shri Jagannath is not only regarded as the greatest of Gods but is treated as a King who is loved the most. That is the reason why the culture related to Jagannath is anthropomorphic in nature.

The culture of Jagannath is a vast one. In it are assimilated the religion, philosophy, social mores, rituals and tradition and culture of Orissa. Like the ocean, the expanse of this culture is so vast and the depth so significant that the inquisitive Mind is annoyed while taking a dip into it. For centuries this culture has accepted in the journey of its glorious evolution whatever has come on its way as beneficial and the best. As a result this culture has gone beyond the narrow limits of all other cultures as has become a culture marked by hospitable openness. The generosity and nobleness of this culture have been the inspiration behind its anthropomorphism. The significance can be felt in the system of worship, offerings and the festivals related to the Lord.

The great Lord Shri Jagannath is not only worshipped as God but also the king of Orissa. While at the core of the Oriya nation was nothing but the echoes of despair resulting from exploitation and coercion from the foreign aggressors, Shri Jagannath was the only symbol of faith who generated the indomitable

spirit for survival. The divided Orissa could re-establish her political unity as a whole only banking upon Jagannath as the centre. The feudal Lords were reunited and reorganised forgetting all their past differences and mean rivalry. That helped the Gajapati Kings of Orissa to gain strength and resources to fight the external forces. In Orissa Jagannath is the Lord, the sovereign in every body's thinking. The ordinary laymen and the men of letters all think in the above way about the Lord. That is why in his rituals (from leaving the bed to going back to it again at night) Jagannath is treated more as a human being than a God. Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh has aptly said that, "Jagannath is the God of the people among all Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Among all the deities of this subcontinent Jagannath has evolved out of the spiritual wishes of the ordinary man. If the common people of Orissa have ever been benefited by the patriot kings it has been because of the ideologies of Jagannath. He was the real Lord of the vast Gajapati empire. The kings and Lords have never thought of their kingdoms as personal wealth to be consumed at their whims. Rather they have treated their states as trust property. Since Jagannath has entered in to the life of Oriyas as a native, the Oriyas in turn have offered the best of their culture in His service like dance, poetry and epic, culinary art and the precious luxury items".

Just as the kings hold their courts everyday and the common man enjoys the right to meet the king in the court with his appeals, the system in the culture of Jagannath offers the same kind of facility. Shri



Jagannath grants to every body from a close proximity. This 'Darshan' open to all without discrimination is called 'Sahanamela'. During this period any body can come to him freely, express his miseries, touch the throne called "Ratna Singhasana" and get the rare opportunity of communicating with Him.

On the "Ratna Singhasana", Shri Jagannath is accompanied by the elder brother 'Balabhadra' and sister 'Subhadra'. That means his fond brother and sister are staying with Him. Mahalaxmi, though she is the wife of Jagannath, is worshipped in a separate temple and does not stay on the "Ratna Singhasana". Because, in Oriya cultural system, the younger brother's wife and the elder brother can not stay together. That apart the sweet human relationship between brother and sister is reflected in the culture of Jagannath.

Among the twelve annual festivals of Sri Jagannath the important ones are 'Chandana Yatra', 'Snana Yatra' and 'Ratha Yatra'. In all these three festivals the human aspect of the culture is more evident. It is very hot in the month of 'Baisakha' (Summer). Because of heat, Jagannath suffers like an ordinary human being inside the shrine of 'Bada Deula'. To be relieved of that suffering, the 'Chandana Yatra' of the Lord begins. This is a twenty one days long festival, beginning on the day called 'Akshaya Trutiya'. All these twenty-one days, the deities are treated with cool ingredients like sandal wood paste and camphor.

With a cool composure, under the cool air, across the cool water of 'Narendra Sarobara', Madan Mohan, representative of Sri Jagannath Mahaprabhu, along with Sridevi, Bhudevi, Rama, Krishna and Pancha Pandva (five Shivas viz. Lokanatha, Jameswara, Markandeswara, Nilakantha and Kapala Mochana) plays water sports. This

makes the unbearable Summer bearable. On the occasion of 'Snana Yatra', the deities ascend over the bathing platform, known as 'Snana Mandap'. As they bathe in the ice-cold water of the well, they suffer from cold and fever. They retire to the 'Anasara' chamber meant for rest and convalescence for a fortnight. All usual rituals are kept suspended during this period. He rests in this solitary enclosure taking medicines and restrained diet. He does not give darshan to anybody nor listens to any body's appeal during this phase. Perhaps in no ritual related to other deities one comes across such anthropomorphic treatment and its symbolic excellence.

Ratha Yatra (Car festival) is treated as the best yatra among all the festivals of Shri Jagannath. It starts from the second of the bright lunar phase of 'Ashadha' (*Asadha Shukla Dwitiya*) (June to July). This yatra celebrates His visit to Gundicha Temple accompanied by His brother and sister in three different chariots. As if to listen to the endless voices of conflicts and miseries of the mass. He embarks upon this journey outside His abode 'Sri Mandira'. Since He is treated as a fond kin by every body in Orissa, He comes down to the Grand road outside to greet them all. Since He does not ask Laxmi, His wife to join Him in this trip, she feels neglected. Irritated one breaks portions of His *Rath* (Car) parked close to the Gundicha Temple. This rite is observed on the day called '*Hera Panchami*'. On His return journey by chariot on the road side after 'Balagandi' comes the house of His Aunt, a small temple compared to the huge structure of the Temple of Lord Jagannath, it appears to be a small hut. Whether She lives in a hut or under a tree, She is His Aunt. How can He come back without meeting her, without exchanging fond words with her ! What would She think of Him !



A great man - so He ignored her. That is why Jagannath stops for a while near "Mausi Ma Temple", on His way on the chariot. After sharing some feelings with Her, He resumes His journey. The feelings of love, anger, expectation and neglect among Gods and Goddesses related to the culture and religion of Lord Jagannath are structured in semblance with that of the ordinary human beings. The whole culture of Jagannath is orchestrated with human feelings.

'Shri Mandira', the Temple of Lord Jagannath is a lovely symbol of our familiar culture. In spite of being a God, Shri Jagannath is more related with the norms and mores of the society of men. That is why He suffers if He takes a bath in cold water. His body is scorched by the heat of the summer Sun. In winter he needs winter clothes. In 'Shri Mandira', the little quarrels usual to married couples too happens. Mahalakshmi has to bear the insults from Her husband as She had accepted the offerings of Shriya (a woman of lower caste). She even goes to Her father's palace leaving Jagannath in a state called '*Lakshmichhada*'. In place of sixty tonnes, his due, he does not get even sixty grains of rice. He faces trouble when He finds the main entrance of the Temple (Sinhadwara) locked by angry Laxmi on His return from car festival. If one watches all these, one can feel that Jagannath in His temple lives the life of a '*Grihastha*', a husband Lord in an Indian household. So in the rituals of His worship there is more of familiar human feelings than divine awe.

'Nabakalevara' is a great festival in the religion and culture associated with Lord Jagannath. This too is an extreme and supreme expression of human consciousness. On the eve of 'Nabakalevara', the new idols are built for four deities

(Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsana). After the 'Brahma' is replanted into the newly built idols the old ones are buried in the premises of 'Koili Baikuntha'. The 'Daitapatis', the first kins of the Lord observe '*asoucha*', a kind of mourning for the buried deities. They observe the rituals similar to what is observed in family after the death of a member. Except Shri Jagannath (alongwith Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsana) no Gods or Goddesses change bodies in such manner, nor the ablution etc. Followings of one's death are observed in their cases. This rituals is totally anthropomorphic in nature. The 'Nabakalevara' of Shri Jagannath tells the whole world that even God incarnated on earth in the form of human body has to die, like birth, death is inevitable in this world. On this earth everything dies, except death itself. That is why it touches man and God irrespectively. Even Lord Jagannath is not free from this final consequence of life.

A study of all the aspects of the culture of Jagannath proves that the human expression and signs of the human are more prominent in it than that of the divine. That is the reason of the global popularity of this culture not as noble culture in itself but as a culture, signifying human goodness. Lord Jagannath is a mystery and more mysterious is the culture of Jagannath. But the anthropomorphism involved in the culture keeps it alive through centuries. And for centuries the rhapsody of human feelings embedded in this culture will be vibrating in the hearts of millions.



Convent Area
V.I.P. Road, Puri



Hymns to Jagannatha MADHAVIDASI

● Translations by Subas Pani

Madhavi Dasi is considered the first poetess in the Oriya language. She was a contemporary of the famous *Pancha Sakha* poets (five companions) in the 15th-16th centuries. She was born in the Bentapura village in a Karana family and was the sister of Raya Ramananda, a minister in the court of Prataparudra Deva and a companion and favourite disciple of Sri Chaitanya. Sri Chaitanya personally initiated her into the Vaishnava tenets. Being a woman she was not considered a full disciple, but only a half disciple or *Ardha Shishya*. At the instance of her paternal uncle Bhabananda Raya, she had studied several scriptures and classics. She was however not attracted towards the deeper philosophical issues or the complex details of theology. Her chosen path was that of simple devotion and intense passionate longing for the Lord. Her contact with Sri Chaitanya helped her grow in this direction. She is credited with the composition of *Vaishnava Kirtana* or short compositions for ritual group-chanting, hymns, supplications and other devotional songs in Oriya, Bengali and Brajabhasa. Writing in all the three languages was quite a common practice at that time among the Vaishnava saint-poets, who were followers of Sri Chaitanya. Some of her Bengali poems are included in *Pada Kalpataru*. No separate collection of her devotional songs has come to our notice.

NANDA NANDANA

The darling son of Nanda¹,
He is adored by the whole world.
His body is decorated and worshipped
With fragrant sandalwood paste.
The handsome young son of Braja²,
Hari is the sweetest treasure of Niladri³.

As he retires for the night,
The name of Radha, he holds close to his heart
In tight embrace, full of amorous excitement.
Thrilled with love's passionate ecstasy,
He sleeps on the bedspread decorated with ivory.

The tender, sweet verses of *Sri Geetagovinda*⁴
Bearing the name of Radha⁵,
Are woven into this *Khandua*⁶.
This the Lord holds close to his limbs,
Dallying in luxurious love play,
Full of tender feelings.

May this *Khandua* ever adorn my head,
The one on which Radha's name inscribed,
The same that is Krishna's favourite abode !
May my life come to an end
While my lips with the names
Of Radha and Krishna are attached !

O Hari, consider Madhavi as your companion
Be benign and show me compassion !
Do let me make for my head an ornament,
Of a few leaves of *Tulsi*⁷ sanctified by your feet !

Original Oriya hymn "Sri Nanda nandan se jagabandana....."

Source : Ratha Sharma, Sadasiva. Sri Sri Jagannath O Jayadeva (Oriya). Cuttack ;



Kalinga Student's Store, 1984. p. 60. The author of this book mentions that he had discovered this treasure in Sangitasara, from Braja Kishore Mohanty of Benupur.

SRI HARI

O Lord with Round Eyes⁸!
Life of the world, Sri Hari!
I pray to you in desperation,
Do listen to me with keen attention!

How can I, a wretched woman
Describe or recount the tales
Of all those you have rescued
From many a grave crisis?

These are certainly material
For an entire book to fill.
Ahalya⁹, from her curse, you released.
Draupadi¹⁰, from her travails, you rescued.
The distressed status of the doe you realised,
From the gravest danger she was saved.
O Jagannath, Lord of the World!

Fruits tasted by the woman of the forest¹¹
With utmost relish you ate.
Eating her left-over, on your own
You offered to her the status of heaven!

You were overwhelmed by the passion
Of Meera¹² and Karama's¹³ simple devotion.
To them a place in Braja¹⁴ you did assign.

You even freed from earthly misery
The fallen women like Pingala¹⁵ and Jibanti.
Deeds like these have kept the flag of your victory,
Flying high, spreading your fame and eternal glory.

I alone am an accursed woman,
Unfit to be your servant even.
With folded hands I make this humble plea
O Lord, do listen to Madhavi's entreaty!

Original Oriya hymn "Chaka Nayana he, Jagu
Jibana Sri Hari....."

Source : Nayak, Khetrabasi. Ed. Sri Jagannath

Padyavali - Volume I (Second Edition)
Berhampur : Pustak Bhandar, 1980. p.21.

¹Krishna-Jagannatha. Krishna was the son of Devaki and Vasudeva but grew up in the house of Nanda and Yasoda. Soon after he was born, Krishna was carried to the house of Nanda and exchanged with a new born daughter of the latter.

²Krishna, with whom the poetess fully identifies Jagannatha, was the darling of the entire Gopa Land or Braja Pura. He was therefore, in more sense than one, the son of the entire cowherd community of Braja.

³Here the reference is more directly to Lord Jagannatha, the Lord of the Blue Hills or the Blue Region.

⁴This refers to the elaborate evening ritual of *Bada Simhara Vesha* and the *Bada Simhara Dhupa* in Srimandira everyday. The *Geetagovinda Khandua*, colourful tie and dye silk textile of Orissa with words of Jayadeva's immortal composition, *Sri Geetagovinda* woven into it, cover the deities during this ceremony. See details given in introduction.

⁵The entire text of *Sri Geetagovinda* is woven into several pieces of the *Khandua*, but the most popular of these is the following stanza. 'kamsarirapi Samasara vasana abaddha srinkhalam/ Radham adhaya hridaye tatyaja brasundaribhih.' This can be roughly translated as follows. 'The enemy of kamsa, i.e. Krishna, too got himself entangled in the worldly bonds and cogitating on Radha in his heart, he abandoned the beauties of Braja.'

⁶*Khandua* is a special silk textile, as explained earlier.

⁷Tulasi, the holy basil plant and a favourite of Vishnu-Krishna-Jagannatha....



⁸The poetess uses the appellation 'Chaka Nayana', a variant of the appellation 'Chaka Dola', both meaning round eyes. Lord Jagannatha is so called because of his perfectly circular eyes, a distinguishing feature of his iconography and one of the greatest attractions for devotees. Subhadra and Balabhadra, however have elongated eyes more closely resembling the human form.

⁹Ahalya had been turned into a stone statue on account of a curse of her husband, the sage Gautama, after Indra, taking the disguise of her husband, seduced her. In his incarnation as Rama, the Lord released her from her curse by placing his feet on the statue and restored her to her former state and caused her reconciliation with her husband. She is considered one of the five chaste women and remembered as such.

¹⁰The daughter of king Drupada, Draupadi was married to the five Pandava brothers. She had been offered as a wager by Yudhisthira, the eldest, in a game of dice with Duryodhana in the court of the Kurus, after he had lost everything else. After Yudhisthira lost her as the final wager, Duryodhana ordered his brother Dussashana, to forcibly disrobe her in the open court. No one protested and no one came forward to the rescue of Draupadi. She called out Lord Krishna in desperation. The Lord heard her prayers and gave her an unending stream of cloth and her honour was saved. Draupadi is also called Panchali, as she was a princess of the Panchala kingdom.

¹¹This refers to a well-known episode of Ramayana when Lord Rama, during his exile in the forest, showed his compassion to a Savari or tribal woman. Lost in a

trance in getting her dearest Lord and eager to offer him only the sweetest fruits, she tasted each one before offering them to him. The Lord accepted the gift of her simple devotion and ate these left over fruits with relish, fulfilling the wishes of his devotee.

¹²Meera Bai, a saint poetess of Rajasthan, accepted Krishna as her husband. Her life was full of many trials, in all of which she was miraculously saved. She composed many hymns in praise of Lord Krishna, which are immensely popular throughout India.

¹³Karama Bai was a great devotee of Lord Jagannatha. She loved him with the tender affections of a mother and the Lord accepted food from her in disguise everyday. Even today, a special pot of rice is offered to the Lord in her name in the Srimandira.

¹⁴Here the reference is to the Nitya Braja or the eternal abode of Lord Krishna or heaven.

¹⁵Pingala was a prostitute. Once a rich customer had promised to visit her in the night. Pingala, made up in her best, anxiously waited for him for the whole night but he never turned up. She suddenly became conscious of the Lord and developed vairagya, disinterest in worldly affairs. She then became an ascetic. She became known for her piety and virtuous deeds in spite of her lowly profession.



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The Ratha Yatra of Shri Jagannath

● Jayanta Narayan Panda

Orissa the Land of festivals is known world-wide during the monsoon for the spectacular festival, Ratha Yatra or the Car Festival of Shri Jagannath. Among twelve major festivals, viz. the Snana Yatra, the Ratha Yatra, the Sayan Yatra, the Dakshinayana Yatra, the Parswaparivartan Yatra, the Utthapanaya Yatra, the Pravarana Yatra, the Pusyabhisheka Yatra, the Uttarayana Yatra, the Dola Yatra, the Damanaka Yatra and the Akshaya Trutiya Yatra are celebrated inside the temple of Lord Jagannath ; The Ratha Yatra or the Car Festival of Lord deserves special mention. This festival draws millions of tourists both in-land and foreigners to the Grand Road. And the deities come down from the main temple to the Grand Road to meet the ocean of pilgrims.

Preparations for the festival start much before. Every year new chariots are constructed. Only the 'Sarathi' (charioteer), Ghoda (horses), Kalasa (Crowning element) and Parswa devatas are not made new every year. They are prepared on the year of Navakalebara (New-body ceremony). In terms of the provisions laid down in the Puri Car Festival code, it is the responsibility of the Forest Department of Govt. of Orissa to supply the required timber for construction of the Rathas free of cost every year. As a matter of practice, the Divisional Forest Officers of Nayagarh and Khurda have been supplying 72 Nos. of Fasi, 729 Nos. of Asan, Dhaura timbers and 274 Nos. of

Green timbers respectively. Beside the D.F.O. Nayagarh have been supplying 3 Nos. of Simuli timbers for last some years. Now a days the availability of Fasi species of trees has become a problem in Nayagarh Division, as a result of which the D.F.O. Nayagarh has to procure the Fasi trees from other Divisions to supply the same to the Temple Administration. Like previous years the D.F.O. Nayagarh sends first truck load of timber before 'Basanta Panchami' and the rest of the timbers reaches in a phased manner.

The construction of the Rathas starts on the Akshaya Trutiya day. The progress of construction is monitored regularly by a team of officials. The Executive Engineer, R & B, Puri Division, Puri is reviewing the progress from time to time. Total number of 92 Maharanas, 81 Bhois, 22 Kamars and 22 Rupakaras are engaged in the construction work of the Rathas. To cover the Rathas 14 number of Darajis (tailors) prepare the Rath Mandani.

Allied materials in connection with the car festival are collected by the temple administration well in advance. The car ropes are supplied by the Kerala Coir Corporation. The clothes for Rathmandani are procured from the Orissa Textile Mills. The *lagi* cloth of the Lords are prepared by the traditional weavers where as Basunga Patta (Silken thread) are arranged by the State Tassar and Silk Co-operative Society. Salresins are procured locally, Til oil is supplied by Consumer Co-



operative Federation. Sandal wood stock has been procured from the Karnataka Govt. and musk is given from the office stock.

Arrangements for the car festival is reviewed in the Temple Co-ordination Committee and the time table for the great festival is approved in the Temple Managing Committee meeting. As specified in the Puri Car Festival Code, meetings of the District level Co-ordination Committee under the chairmanship of the Revenue Divisional Commissioner (CD) are held in regular intervals wherein thread-bare discussions relating to arrangements of all the line Department are held. The District Collector takes the meeting of a group of dedicated officers very often who are kept in charge of supervision of allied arrangements, viz. sanitation, drinking water, light arrangement, temporary shed, distribution of essential commodities, transport arrangement etc. The Superintendent of Police take care of the police arrangements.

All the three chariots after being constructed and decorated traditionally are dragged to the Lions gate in the afternoon of the day preceding Sri Gundicha. The S.P. Puri provides man power for the same. On the day of Sri Gundicha 'Ratha Pratistha' is performed by the 'Deul Purohita' and then the divine procession of the deities start from the temple to the cars, which is known as 'Pahandi'. Thousands of people buy tickets and go inside the temple to have a *darshan* of the Lords during their 'Pahandibije'. First 'Sudarsana' is carried to the Car of 'Subhadra' and then comes 'Balabhadra' in a procession. 'Subhadra' is taken to her Car like 'Sudarsana'.

Finally Lord Jagannath leaves his abode towards his Car and is held tightly by the Daitapatis in their arms and pulled from the behind by other sevakas. The floral head-gear gives an enchanting look when the deities make their way to the Cars placed on the Grand Road. Then 'Madanmohan' is taken to the Cars by the 'Mahajan' Sevakas. Then the police picket waiting near the palace of Maharaja escort the 'Gajapati Maharaja' to the Cars, where, as the first sevaka of the Lord, he performs 'Chhera Pahanra' and after offering his prayers he goes back to his palace.

The Chariot of Lord Balabhadra is called 'Taladhwaja'. Its height is 13.2 metres. It has got 14 wheels. Matali is the charioteer of this Car. Four wooden horses of black colour fixed to the chariot are known as Tibra, Ghora, Dirghasrama and Swarnanabha. Vasuki serves the Car as Car rope. The Car is wrapped in red and green clothings.

The Chariot of Goddess Subhadra is known as Deva Dalan, Darpadalana or Padma Dhwaja. Its height is 12.9 metres. It has got 12 wheels. The name of the Sarathi is Arjun. Four wooden horses of red in colour attached to the Chariot are called Rochika, Mochika, Jita and Aparajita. The Car rope is called Swarnachuda. The Car is wrapped in black and red clothings.

The Chariot of Lord Jagannath is called Nandighosha. It has a height of 13.5 metres. There are 16 wheels in this Car. The name of the Charioteer is Daruka. Four white wooden horses fixed to the Car are known as Sankha, Balahaka, Sweta and Haridaswa. Sankhachuda serves as Car rope in this



Car. The Car is wrapped in red and yellow clothings.

When the Cars are dragged from Rathakhala to the Lions Gate, the Car of Lord Jagannath moves first. When the Cars are dragged on the Grand Road with the deities mounted, the Car of Lord Balabhadra is dragged first. At Gundicha Temple when the Cars are made ready before the return journey, the Car of 'Subhadra' is taken first.

When the wheels roll on the Grand Road people forgetting their caste, creed and sex extend their hands to just touch the Car-rope and pull it. Time here in Orissa does not sleep in the ancient caves, it rolls through these wheels of progress.

The trinity along with 'Sudarsana' stays at the Gundicha Temple otherwise known as the 'garden house' by many till Navami. Millions of people visit Gundicha Temple to have a *darshan* of the Lord. This temple is also known as Adhapa Mandap, Jagna Mandap, Jagna Vedi and Janakapuri. On the 10th day of the Asadha, the return journey begins. Goddess Lakshmi who has not escorted the Lord in this journey meets Him near the palace of the Gajapati Maharaja. On the next day, the deities are nicely decorated in golden costume and millions of people gather here to have the *darshan* of the Lords in this costume. Then after two days the Lords return to Their abode after purifying the sinful and thus the Ratha Yatra come to an end.

Though the 'Daitapatis' have got a

major role to play in this grand festival, other sevakas viz. Pati Mahapatra, Mudirasta, Pujapanda, Puspalaka, Mahajan, Bhitarachha, Mekap, Pratihari, Akhanda, Muduli, Khataseja, Garabadu., Chageda, Khuntia, Mukha Pakhal, Darpania, Pania Apat, Ghatuari, Bhandar Mekap, Suar Badu, Dhopakhal, Rosa Paika, Lenka, Patri Badu, Suddha Suara, Ballav Jogania, Mahasuara, Kothabhoga Pania, Pradhani, Hadap Nayak, Bidia Jogania, Ghantua, Bajantri, Chhatara, Kahalia, Talichha, Asthan Pratihari, Badu Suara, Bindua, Pagua, Tolabadu, Chanapua, Thali Suar, Biribhuha, Handi Jogania, Amalu Suar, Bidua, Pantibadu, Bahara Pantibadu, Bahar Deuli Suar, Datta Mohapatra, Olhar, Chatara, Kanti Mahasuar, Tadhau Karana, Deula Karana, Deula Purohita, Dayanamali, Bimanbadu, Parba Jatra Jogania, Maharana, Bhoi, Rupakara, Chitrakara, Daraji, Dahuka etc. have got certain roles to play either in connection with the performance of the rituals or construction of the chariots. Even the Gajapati Maharaja is associated with certain rituals.

Now since the Car festival of Lord Jagannath has become an international festival, it is observed in more than 60 countries. In spite of that millions of people road their way to Puri to have a *darshan* of the Lords on the Car. Millions of people switch on their T.V. sets to have a glance of the festival through direct telecast.



Ex-Administrator
Shri Jagannath Temple, Puri



Development of Tourism in Socio-Religious Cultural backdrop of Puri

● **Purna Chandra Gochhikar**

Tourism, in the present context, has gathered momentum and emerged as the biggest industry of the future. In Orissa, tourism is an integral part of our tradition and culture. In the olden days, tourism was primarily for pilgrimage - as the holy places attract people from different parts of the country and abroad. Our historical and archaeological monuments continue to be the biggest draw in attracting pilgrims and tourists and provide opportunities to learn about ancient history and culture. People also used to visit these places of importance to participate in different melas, fairs and festivals. In such a background, it developed a socio-religio-cultural tradition where "Atithi Devo Bhava" (the guest is God) became bywords of our social behaviour. A study reveals that about 54% of tourists in India enjoy their stay because of monumental heritage and religious heritage.

The study covers the small temple town of Puri, which is known as both places of tourism and pilgrimage since remote past. Pilgrimage and Tourism both being considered one distinct concept, have been inextricably blended in the cultural fabric of Jagannath Dham. It assumes significance as the seat of Lord Jagannath and constitutes points of attraction for pilgrims and tourists. It is assimilated with various cultural trade with enriched image of universal faternity symbolised in the holy trinity of Lord Jagannath.

Beside the Grand temple complex, Puri has beautiful blue ocean in its southern side which is unique in India in respect of its scenic beauty. At the same time, the sea of Puri called "Mahodadhi" is the greatest among the Tirthas (Tirtharaj) in which the sacred Daru or the log came floating and ultimately assumed the shape of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan.

Puri sea-beach being shallow, is pleasant for bathing by tourists and the commoners in general, whereas a pilgrim considers it very pious particularly on the auspicious days like Kartika Purnima, solar eclipse, special snana yoga etc. Here the sea has a religious linkage with Lord Jagannath as the God representative visits the sea on each Amabasya day. There are many other shrines and sacred tanks having equal religious and historical importance at Puri which the pilgrims and tourists are required to visit. As a place of pilgrimage, Puri has witnessed a galaxy of Dharmacharyas, saints etc. of different sects from the time that history could reckon. The great Hindu religious preachers like Sankaracharya, Sri Chaitanya and many more have visited Lord Jagannath, established their Mathas and perpetuated their devotion to Lord Jagannath regardless of their sectarian and philosophical differences. At present 169 Mathas and Ashrams have so far been identified belonging to various sects of Hindu community. The Non-Hindu monasteries like Kabir Chaura of Santha



Kabir, Mongu Math and Bauli Math of Guru Nanak, Siddhabakula Math by Jaban Haridas etc. add to the cosmopolitan cultural character and all India socio-religious as well as cultural scenario perceptible in Puri. Therefore, it is rightly called an epitome of Indian culture and an unique syncretism of divergent sects of Hindu Religion.

The historical Town Puri has witnessed many vagaries of the history. The great temple of Lord Jagannath was under Independent Hindu Kings till 1568 A.D. The administrative control has then passed on to Afghans after they invaded Orissa killing the last Hindu Ruler Gajapati Mukunda Deva and continued up to 1590 A.D. Then the province was ceded to Moghul Empire and it continued so till 1803. During this period, the temple and the town were attacked many times by Muslims and the Deities were taken to different inaccessible hide-outs for safety. But most interestingly, though the invasions caused some peripheral effects, they did not affect its intrinsic vitality. Rather it emerged as a potential area for development both structural and cultural.

Puri is also endowed with different colourful festivals throughout the year centering around the ritual system of Lord Jagannath. The Car festival, Dola festival, Chandan Yatra etc. are prominent among them. A large congregation of pilgrims and tourists are found in these festivals. Many eminent foreign tourists like William Bruton in the 16th century, Non-Hindu scholars like Sterling, Furgusson, Beams and emissaries like Buchanon, Lurry and many others have visited the place as an object of tourism.

In view of the increasing tourist influx to the town, strategic development of its

physical growth has not been done at par with the requirements. It is evident from the remotest map of Puri town prepared by the Survey of India in the year 1840-41 that the existing land use for residential and commercial purposes was very less compared to the area it covers. It was mainly concentrated around the temple. The habitable area of the town constituted approximately 7% to 8% of the entire area and the remaining vast land was left as gardens. The grand road was the only major road which was shown in the aforesaid map as "Saradha Balee or Road for Jaggurnauth Rath". The population of the town was 23,837 with 6,620 households. The entire coastal belt was full of gardens with Casurina Plantation. The pilgrims who visited the town were estimated to be 55,000. Presently Puri Development area covers with an area of 63,585 sq. km. which includes the Municipal area and 16 other adjoining revenue villages. Puri is linked with the capital town Bhubaneswar on one side and Konark on the other. Thus it constitutes a Golden Triangle. The present population of the Town comes around 1.55 lacs. with a decadal growth rate of 24%. As such within a span of about a century and a half, its population growth has been seven fold. Due to development of communication and transport facilities, the natural growth of population increased through migration from its hinterland and so also the number of pilgrims and tourists increased substantially and thus it has put stupendous pressure for its physical growth. It is revealed that more than 60% of the total tourists/ pilgrims arriving the state, visit Puri. Of course, it will be fallacious to draw a water-tight compartment for tourism and pilgrimage.



Considering the growth trend of pilgrims and tourists of the town, a strategic policy is required to be worked out. As Puri is basically a place of pilgrimage, a religious environment with modern concept of tourism like "**SPIRITUAL TOURISM**" has to be properly assessed and explored taking with all subsidiary shrines, Mathas and monasteries. Development of tourism should not be limited to hotels and restaurants. The services related to these sectors, cover an extensive range from airport to public conveniences all designed to provide the visitor with a pleasant and delectable experience. It will be more meaningful if the town is provided with good road network, water and sanitation, power supply and telecom facilities. To attract more visitors to the town, entertainment facilities in the evening, development of diversified avenues like amusement parks, water

sports etc. need to be taken up. In addition to this, promotional facilities are to be provided to the traditional dance and music, Folk dance like Naga, Medha (a kind of traditional dance with the mask of God and Goddess.), Martial Art exhibition etc. which is being performed during "Sahi Yatra" on the eve. of Rama Navami every year has to be promoted.

Amid all these above, time has come when we should not popularise our attraction but also assure the visitors that they can have a comfortable stay which will be hassle-free and they will get value of money.



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Mobile Telephone is not allowed inside the Temple Premises.

Sri Jagannath Temple Administration, Puri



Of Customs, Kings and Common Men

● Prof. Markanda Chandra Mishra (Rtd.)

"Once there was a king" - This well-known statement has always been an open sesame to an imaginary kingdom vibrant with love, adventure, chivalry, wit and wisdom. King Solomon, King Arthur, King Vikramaditya and a lot others have left their indelible foot-prints on the sands of time as prototypes of the richness and variety that celebrate the very principle of life. This shipwrecked generation of ours can hardly conjure up the visions of those bygone days when intellectual aristocracy ruled the roost despite abject poverty brewing mischief around. Commoners thronged the streets to witness a procession led by a king in a full panoply. They stood enraptured when the pageant passed by amid a rich orchestra of colour, sound and scent. Its aesthetic aspect touched them to the core. The desire was both primeval and elemental. It gave them a sublime transport and a pleasant existence which is the result of a momentary trascendence. After all, one does not live by bread alone. Respect for the institution of kingship has been sanctified by tradition. All ancient literature, especially poetry has chosen kings as protagonists because of their irresistible appeal. Rightly does Shakespeare observe :

When Beggars die
 there are no comets seen,
But heavens blaze forth,
 the death of kings.

It is sheer argumentative madness to wrench the above lines out of their proper context and to look for a political overtone therein. Life is larger than any doctrine and

there can't be a why ? to every feeling spontaneously welling up in man's breast. Love for what is grand and great is deeply ingrained in man and he derives a vicarious pleasure from spectacles of glory and grandeur without the least taint of malice or jealousy. So where else can they trace it in greater abundance if not in a king and his bearings ? Monuments of flamboyant architecture and some masterpieces of world literature owe their origin and patronage to kings and emperors, who would otherwise have passed into oblivion. Hence the people go into ecstasy while uttering - Once there was a king.

During the spacious times of king Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva, Utkal stood at the top of her golden hours. He started the building of the temple of Lord Jagannath around 1135 A.D. In order to commemorate his victory over Utkal. It was he who initiated some seminal reforms in the administration of the temple for the first time. With a view to consolidating his sprawling regime which extended from the River Godavari in the south to the River Ganges in the north, he declared Shri Jagannath the state deity and carried out his kingly duties as His deputy. The dawn of a new era broke. The king was no more the sovereign lord. The repressed hostility towards an alien conqueror got sublimated in a quiet acquiescence. It was the Lord who was the catalyst. Sri Anangabhima Deva, another of his worthy successors dedicated his empire to Shri Jagannath and declared himself his most humble servant. His



complete spiritual identification with the Lord earned him the unique appellation of THAKUR RAJA, which has since been applied to every Gajapati King. An offence to the king was viewed as an offence to their Beloved Lord. In these days of shifting paradigms of morality we can hardly imagine how it all happened. The kings were always benevolent and charismatic. Decentralisation of power was not unknown. Democracy ceased to be a drunken Cleon, surrounded by an yelling mob.

Thus the twilight ushered in by the Ganga Kings broadened into high noon during the reign of those of the Solar Dynasty. Under the unstinting patronage of the Gajapatis a cultural renaissance overtook Utkal with Puri as its cradle. Mystic poets scaled new heights of metaphysical speculations taking Sri Jagannath to be the main motif or theme. Puranas and epics, coloured by the contemporary milieu, were composed in order to cater to the growing needs of the people. Music, dancing, art etc. were all spiritualised by virtue of their ritualistic association within the Lord. The mellifluous melody of Gita Govindam resounded inside the sanctum sanctorum to the nimble foot-steps of 'Devadasis'. However, military valour was never relegated to the background in spite of Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramanand - two major prophets of the period.

Misfortunes started raining on Utkal by and by, but the kings and their people bore it all bravely. They protected the Lord and his culture from the rapacious greed of marauding bands bent upon destroying all that was good. As saviours they were as good as the Lord Himself.

Customs die very hard and harder still is the extinction of a trait which is so

inextricably woven into the very psyche of the Oriyas. The Gajapati Maharaja or the Thakur Raja is just not an individual, but a phenomenon. He is the epitome of an emotional and intellectual complex - a reminder of the glory that was Orissa and the grandeur that was Puri.

The present Maharaja, His Royal Highness Sri Dibyasingha Deva IV, the scion of the mighty line referred to above, was born in 1953 and coronated king in 1970. As per tradition he had to drop his earlier name Kamarnava. It is customary to adopt one from a panel of four names only by rotation. The order is : Rama Chandra, Birakeshari, Dibyasingha and Mukunda. The queens do also follow the same regular pattern, the order being - Rani Saheba Padmavati Patta Maha Dei, Suryamani, Lilavati and Chandramani. H.H. Dibyasingha graduated from Delhi University with a degree in Law and did his P.G. programme at the north-western University of Chicago, U.S.A. He got married to a princess related to the royal family of Kashmir in 1978. Having practised law for about 5 years in the Delhi High Court and The Supreme Court of India he returned to the fold of his first Love- Sri Jagannath of Puri. His palace, popularly known as SRI NAHAR, an organic part of the temple so far as rituals are concerned, stands majestically beside the Grand Road only a few yards away from the Lion's Gate. A glance at the blue wheel (Nila Chakra) is inevitably alternated by one at the solemn facade of Sri Nahar guarded by two rampant lions brooding over the glory that has departed. But to an average Oriya, 'though much is taken, much abides.' The Maharaja of Puri is the first servitor of the Lord. In fact he is the prime mover of all important rituals and festivals including the world-renowned Car Festival. His role



becomes prominent and public on occasions like the Car Festival (Ratha Yatra) Return festival (Bahuda) and Bathing festival (Snana Yatra) when he performs the symbolic act of sweeping (Chhera pahanra) before the functions get off to a colourful start. The people of Orissa do not look upon him as a person shining in reflected glory by reasons of his birth and association with the Lord. He is a veritable part of the Lord Himself flashing a glimpse of His divine glories (Bhibuti). In common parlance the Maharaja of Puri is the Chalanti Vishnu or mobile god. In Bhagavad Geeta the Lord says :

Know Me as Ucchisravas, born of nectar,
among horses ;
Among lordly elephants
I am the Airavata ;
And among men, THE KING. (Ch.X-27)

Yet he is an humble servant of the Lord - the topmost bonafide servitor heading a list of around 140 different categories of functionaries mentioned in the Records concerned. A crowned servant of queer icons ! Inscrutable are the ways of the Lord. During his occasional visits into the precincts of the great Temple the treatment meted out to him is commensurate with that rendered unto the Lord. Of course time has its toll on the paraphernalia but the Kahali (pipe, blown), Chhati (wellwrought umbrella) and Suna Beta (gold-cane) reign supreme still. On Car Festival he glides like an angel in his sumptuous "Tamzan" (palanquin) led by a caparisoned elephant and ceremonially armed attendants amid chanting of soulful Vedic hymns. Surging crowds rend the sky with cries of victory. It is indeed a day when they have a tryst with their great tradition and culture. The king's meditative posture before the images followed by the long awaited "sandal-sweeping" (Chhera

Pahanra) of the chariotfloor wafts up a vibration too intractable for words.

The very dynamics of Hindu culture which is essentially humanitarian and flexible also characterizes Sri Jagannath culture. Equality and fraternity provide the pillars on which it rests. Religion, philosophy and rituals constitute three major strands of the same river which quietly flows as the religion of man. "Cult" is too poor a word to contain its vast expanse. The Republic of Gods noticed inside the great temple prove it beyond any reasonable doubt. The absence of hierarchy among the 'Sevayats' of various castes and the status assigned to "Mahaprasad" are cases in point. The present Maharaja of Puri is wedded to the mission of propagating this eternal culture both inside the state and outside, through lectures, discourses and tours. New centres of Jagannath Consciousness, the essence of which is unflinching faith and pure devotion, are sprouting up in every nook and corner of the world in the form of temples and societies. Gracing such occasions as a spiritual ambassador he is trying to usher in a renaissance of peace, bliss and brotherhood in a world torn by strife and unrest. As the chairman of the Temple Managing Committee he is trying hard to initiate certain seminal measures for the benefit of the million pilgrims visiting Puri every year. His uncommon bonhomie, unfrozen geniality and passionate eloquence have swayed people irrespective of their status.

May the Lord fulfil Himself
through him for many more years !

May the posterity go into raptures
while uttering - Once there was a king !



SATYASRI
Subhadra Lane, Puri



Lord Jagannatha's Ratha-yatra worldwide

● Akinchana Priyabandhu Das

The Ratha-yatra of Lord Jagannatha has been held in Purusottama Ksetra (also known as Sri Ksestra, Jagannatha Puri, Nilacala, Purusottama Puri, etc.), and then in other places in India, since time immemorial. According to the authority of Skanda Purana, Lord Jagannatha appeared in this world in the second part of the Svayambhuva manvantara and the Ratha-yatra began in Satya-yuga of the second manvantara in the present day of Lord Brahma, i.e. during the reign of Svarocisa Manu. It is further mentioned in the Skanda Purana that the Ratha-yatra will continue until the end of the second parardha of Brahma's life¹. However, in the Western world the first Ratha-yatra of Lord Jagannatha took place 36 years ago, in 1967, in San Francisco (USA). The prehistory of this wonderful event is also very wonderful, and it all started in the 1870s, when the first law Graduate of Orissa, Kedarnath Dutt (Kedaranatha Datta), who is now world famous as Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, became the Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector of Puri².

After completing his studies in Calcutta, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura came to Orissa, because his paternal house was there, in the village Choti, which now belongs to the Kendrapara district. Bhaktivinoda Thakura not only obtained a very good education, but also worked to spread it among his compatriots. For the benefit of the

oppressed people of Orissa, he started the first English-medium school in Kendrapara. That Kendrapara High School is still there now, and Bhaktivinoda Thakura was the first teacher and headmaster in 1858. Later he became the first headmaster of the Bhaktamadhu Vidyapitha, a High School in Cuttack, and of the Anglo-vernacular school of Bhadrak (now it is Bhadrak Government High School).

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura was not only a very learned person, but also a great devotee of Krsna. Many generations of his forefathers worshipped Lord Jagannatha. Therefore, when Bhaktivinoda Thakura was posted as the Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector of Puri and was requested to watch over the affairs of the Temple of Jagannatha on behalf of the Government, he was very happy. Many years later, in a letter to one of his sons, he wrote about those days : "Just as the Jagannatha Temple is very lofty and beautiful, so also the service to the Deity was wonderful. To see it was charming to the mind. Daily, from five to seven hundred people were present to see the routine festivals like the evening arati, etc. What bliss ! Many kinds of pilgrims came from all over India to attend the religious festivals. Seeing that, one's eyes are soothed. O Lalu, when you behold all these pastimes with a pure heart, only then can these events be understood. There were many



celebrations, like Dola-yatra, Ratha-yatra, etc.... I made such great exertions to oversee the pilgrims - how can I write of it all ? I would make favourable arrangements for the pilgrims to see the Deity and take prasada, and I would hear the people's complaints.... I spent my time in Puri in great happiness, seeing the festivals, acquiring knowledge and devotion. Purusottama-Ksetra is directly Vaikuntha. What doubt is there ?"³

Over and above the aforementioned activities of Bhaktivinoda Thakura, he was the pioneer of the program of propagating the teachings and glories of Lord Krsna throughout the world. Despite his numerous responsibilities as a government officer and a family man, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has written more than one hundred books and articles in half a dozen languages, protecting and preaching the pure Bhagavata religion. He even sent some of these books to the West and they were well appreciated, especially by the German and American scholars. Bhaktivinoda Thakura personally went to many places, especially in Bengal and Orissa, to preach the Holy Name, and he inspired and organized Lord Caitanya's followers. Still, he was feeling that, to start a worldwide spiritual revolution he needed a very able assistant. Therefore, he prayed to the Lord to send a "ray of Visnu" and an answer to Bhaktibinoda's prayers, a very special son was born to him in February 1874 in Jagannatha Puri. An experienced astrologer pointed out all the symptoms of a great personality, a maha-purusa, in the body of the newborn child. Moreover, the boy was born with his umbilical cord wrapped around his neck

like a Brahmin thread. Bhaktivinoda Thakura gave him the name Bimala Prasad. Later this son became internationally known as Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada, and he is mentioned as such in the largest dictionary of the Oriya language, Purnachandra Bhasakosa. During the Ratha-yatra in 1874, Lord Jagannath's chariot stopped in front of the place where Bhaktivinoda Thakura was staying with his family (they were renting a house on the Grand Road, quite close to Jagannatha Mandir). Bimala Prasad's mother, Bhagavati Devi, brought the child to Lord Jagannatha's chariot. The boy, who was about six months old, crawled from the lap of his mother to embrace Lord Jagannatha, and an offered garland fell from the neck of the Lord and encircled the child. The anna-prasana and all other auspicious ceremonies for his child were performed with Lord Jagannatha's Mahaprasada.

Then Bhaktivinoda Thakura was posted in another place, and the whole family had to leave Puri. But both Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura would come to Puri and spend a lot of time here, especially in their later years. When Bimala Prasad was still a school boy, his father brought for him tulasi beads from Jagannatha Puri and initiated him into chanting the Hare Krsna maha-mantra and the Nrsimha mantra. From the beginning of his life Srila Bhaktisiddhanta was perfectly trained and prepared for his great mission. Following in his father's footsteps, he preached vigorously in many languages to spread Lord Caitanya's message throughout India and abroad.



Many educated Indians and even some foreigners became his disciples. In 1933 he sent his first team of preachers to London. At that time one atheistic scholar, professor Bauver, wrote a letter to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura asking him why he had unnecessarily sent preachers to England. He said they would not give the preachers even one inch of a place in their heart, because they had already driven out the spiritual masters of their country long ago. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta replied : "I do not only wish to have one inch of place in your heart, but to also occupy the whole of Europe, upon which the throne of Purusottama shall be installed." "Thus Srila Bhaktisiddhanta wanted to turn the whole Europe into another Purusottamaksetra !

Next year, on May 19, 1934, at the temple of Alalanatha (Brahmagiri) Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura made the following statement. "akasayana bimana rathare Sri Jagannatha devanku istabarna landanaka nebaku heba"⁵ ("We must take Lord Jagannatha in an airplane chariot to Eastbourne and to London"). It did not happen immediately, but in the late 1960s this transcendental desire and prophecy of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta was brilliantly fulfilled by his great disciple A.C. Bhakivedanta Swami, who is known throughout the world as "Srila Prabhupada" and who has introduced the worship of Lord Jagannatha and the Ratha-yatra in London and in many other cities in different countries. In February 1970 Srila Prabhupada wrote to "My Dear Bhaji Hanuman Prasad Poddar" (the famous founder of the "Gita Press" with whom Prabhupada had a very friendly

relationship): "The Deities worshipped in (ISKCON) temples are Jagannatha Swami with Balarama and Subhadra and Radha-Krsna. When we first start a temple. We start with Jagannath Swami. My Guru Maharaja recommended temples of Jagannatha in these countries, so I was inspired to establish first of all Jagannatha Swami because He is kind even to the mlecchas. Then, when there is opportunity I establish Radha-Krsna murti."⁶ Again, in 1973 Srila Prabhupada wrote : "I want to see my disciples all over the world introduce two items, opening Radha-Krsna temples and Ratha-yatra festivals." Therefore, it is certainly not by chance that Lord Jagannatha's worship and the Ratha-yatra have been introduced in the Western world. It may be safely said that in all those countries where ISKCON is well established, Lord Jagannatha is worshipped and the Ratha-yatra is held.

Srila prabhupada spent the first part of his life in Calcutta and there he first met his spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, who requested him to spread the message of Lord Caitanya throughout the English-speaking world. In September 1965 Srila Prabhupada came to the USA and in July 1966, after almost a year of great struggle and austerity, he established the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Soon after the first centre was established in New York, Srila Prabhupada brought the message of Krsna consciousness to another important American city, San Francisco. There, in early 1967, Lord Jagannatha made His merciful appearance.

One day a new disciple of Srila



Prabhupada (her name is Malati Devi Dasi) purchased a small wooden figure in a shop and came to show it to Srila Prabhupada. As soon as Srila Prabhupada saw the figure, he immediately offered obeisances with folded hands. He then happily told Malati : "You have brought Jagannatha, the Lord of the Universe. He is Krsna Himself. Thank you very much." After that Prabhupada explained to Malati and other devotees that Krsna in the form of Jagannatha is worshipped all over India but especially in Puri, in the state of Orissa. Countless thousands of pilgrims come there to see and worship Lord Jagannatha along with His brother Balarama and His sister Subhadra. Then Malati remembered that she had seen two similar figures in the same shop. She immediately went to purchase them, and indeed, these were the figures of their Lordships Baladeva and Subhadra. Srila Prabhupada narrated the story of king Indradymna, Visvakarma, etc. and then asked whether any of the devotees present knew carpentry. Fortunately, Malati's husband happened to be a very good carpenter and also a disciple of Srila Prabhupada. On Prabhupada's request he carved one-meter-size murtis of Jagannatha, Balarama and Subhadra. After Srila Prabhupada installed these murtis, San Francisco came to be known among his followers as "New Jagannatha Puri." Prabhupada taught the devotees to chant "Jagannathah svami nayana-pathagami bhabatu me" and to perform a very simple worship of Lord Jagannatha. Every day the devotees offered Their Lordships new garlands, arati, etc., and whoever came to the temple brought some gift for

Jagannatha, like fruits, sweets, flowers, popcorn (!) etc. For the devotees of Lord Jagannatha in India it might not be so easy to imagine what it meant to introduce the worship of Jagannatha in a place where no one was a Hindu or had any knowledge of the Vedic culture. Especially in San Francisco of that time, the young people were not Hindus but hippies ! But Srila Prabhupada saw them all as spirit souls, parts and parcels of Krsna, and very patiently and lovingly he awakened in those souls their natural and spontaneous inclination to worship Jagannatha with love and devotion. This was most important ; and then, step-by-step, Prabhupada introduced a more strict and detailed procedure of worship. These were not only the first Jagannatha Deities worshipped in a temple in the West, but also the first Deities in ISKCON (before that Srila Prabhupada did not install any Deities in America).

As a sannyasi preacher, Srila Prabhupada did not remain very long in one place, and there were so many places all over the world where Krsna consciousness yet had to be introduced ! But when Prabhupada saw that the devotees were upset with his leaving San Francisco (they were crying in the airport), he told them : "If you arrange a Rathayatra for Lord Jagannatha this year, then I shall definitely come to see it." Certainly none of his disciples at that time knew how to construct a Ratha, therefore Srila Prabhupada advised them to rent a truck, make a ratha-like dome and decorate it as nicely as possible. They should put the Deities on this "chariot" and organize a procession, which will move slowly through the most important street in San



Francisco. The devotees followed his instructions with great sincerity and enthusiasm and, by the grace of the Lord, the first Ratha-yatra in the Western world (July 1967) was a grand success ! A lot of people joined the procession, and the devotees were dancing and chanting and playing the harmonium and karatalas and distributing apples, oranges, bananas, capatis and throwing flowers all around. Everybody was very happy and Srila Prabhupada knew that his Guru Maharaja and Jagannatha Swami were also pleased.

Shortly after that, the Ratha-yatra was introduced in London, and since then, even until now, it has been held in both these places every year without fail. Whenever Srila Prabhupada and his disciples would bring Krsna consciousness to a new place, they would introduce the worship of Lord Jagannatha there. As early as in 1970 the first Ratha-yatra was held in Tokyo, Japan ! Until 1977, Srila Prabhupada used to personally come and participate in ISKCON Ratha-yatras in different cities : several times in New Jagannatha Puri (San Francisco), then in Los Angeles, London, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York. He recollects that throughout his childhood he would always think how one day, when he becomes grown-up and gets some money, he will buy a ticket to Puri and go to see Lord Jagannatha. Later in his life Srila Prabhupada certainly came to Puri, but even at the tender age of six he conducted his own Ratha-yatra in Calcutta. He asked his father to buy him a toy chariot and help to decorate it, and then under the leadership of the child Prabhupada, who was then known as

Abhay, the children of their neighbourhood performed the Ratha-yatra, with chanting, prasadam distribution, etc., and their parents were quite amused and also participated in the festival. Srila Prabhupada commented that while introducing Deity worship and spiritual festivals all over the world he did the same things, which he had learnt and done as a child, with the help of his good parents.

In 1974 Srila Prabhupada wrote to one of his disciples : "This Ratha-yatra festival is very dear to me from my very childhood days, so I very much appreciate your holding this festival in Chicago."⁷ In many other letters, as well as in his books, lectures and conversations, Prabhupada would instruct and inspire the devotees in their loving service to Lord Jagannatha:

"So far additions for this year's Ratha-yatra, you may make three rathas, one for each of the Deities. The rest of the details are already there, simply you may supply more money for festoons, decorations, flowers, bells, flags, etc. The spiritual sky is far away but you just try to do it following Jagannatha Puri Ratha-yatra."⁸

"Regarding your first question, the bathing ceremony of Lord Jagannatha is observed by His Lordship standing in a bathing tank while each of the devotees in turn offers prayers and obeisances, then pours water to bathe the Lord, then offers obeisances and the next devotee follows the same procedure. All the other devotees are holding kirtana throughout the bathing ceremony.... After being bathed, Lord Jagannatha catches fever and at that time you may carry Him along with Balaramaji and Subhadra to my room



for recovering. During this time, up to Ratha-yatra, any repairs may be made."⁹ In a lecture given in London on July 12, 1973 Srila Prabhupada again stressed the importance of the Ratha-yatra :

"Just like the other day we held the festival, Ratha-yatra chant and take prasadam. That's all. Organize this all over the world. They will be saved. They will understand Krsna."

After the first Ratha-yatra took place in 1967, all new ISKCON centres, especially in the USA, were eager to follow the example of San Francisco. In 1971 Srila Prabhupada participated in the Ratha-yatra in Los Angeles. In summer 1972 the Deities of Jagannatha, Balarama and Subhadra were installed and the Ratha-yatra was held in Philadelphia. It was the first Ratha-yatra on the East Coast of the USA, and Philadelphia became known among devotees as "New Nilachala Dham", just as San Francisco on the West Coast is known as "New Jagannatha Puri." Also, in 1972 Srila Prabhupada installed Jagannatha Deities in Amsterdam. Presently these Deities are residing in a place called Radhadesh (Belgium), but they use to travel and have Their Ratha-yatra in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Hague and other cities in Netherlands and Belgium.

During the Ratha-yatra in London, Srila Prabhupada, although at the age of 76 and in very poor health, walked at the head of a grand procession, chanting and dancing with raised hands all the way to the Trafalgar Square, and there he gave a lecture about the Holy name. Next day on the front page of the newspaper "Daily Guardian" a photo of the ratha appeared,

with the comment that it rivaled the famous column of Lord Nelson. Gradually, under Srila Prabhupada's guidance, the Ratha-yatra festival was introduced in Canada (Toronto, Montreal), France (Paris), Australia (Melbourne, then Brisbane). In 1976 the Ratha-yatra was held in 10 major cities of the world, and both the media and the city authorities used to note that, unlike other big processions, this festival is always very peaceful and well organized. And Srila Prabhupada said : "This is the real United nations - everybody dancing together and glorifying Jagannatha, the Lord of the Universe !" That year, in 1976, Prabhupada participated in the Ratha-yatra in New York, when three great chariots, surrounded by thousands of people, moved through "the most important street of the most important city." The media reports were most favourable. "East meets West on the Fifth Avenue." (It has become a tradition and this year, 2003, the Ratha-yatra in New York is again held on the Fifth Avenue !) After that Ratha-yatra Srila Prabhupada wrote to his disciple Jayananda Das : "For so long I have wanted to have Ratha-yatra in New York and now at long last you have helped me fulfil this long-cherished dream."¹⁰

To arrange a Ratha-yatra always requires combined endeavours of many dedicated devotees, but this devotee, Jayananda, played an especially important role in arranging the Ratha-yatras in the West, beginning with San Francisco in 1967. He would personally construct the chariots, buy the bhoga and decorations, make the advertisements and invite people, inspire and organize



other devotees and then chant and dance during the festival. In 1977, Jayananda, already terminally ill with leukemia, organized the spectacular Los Angeles Ratha-yatra. The festival was a great success, but Jayananda did not take part in it : he left this world a few months earlier, on the day before Nrsimha-Caturdasi. After Jayananda's demise Srila Prabhupada wrote to his leading disciples : "Jayananda's death is glorious. It is very good that he stated, what is the use of such a useless body, better to give it up. He has left his body very wonderfully and has been transferred to Vaikuntha.... I am very proud that I had such a nice disciple. If possible Jayananda's picture should be hung on the Ratha of Lord Jagannatha, and in all our temples a day may be set aside for holding a festival in his honour, just as we do on the disappearance days of other great Vaisnavas."¹¹ There were some other disciples of Srila Prabhupada who left this world before him, but only Jayananda was given such great honour by his spiritual master. Twelve years later, in 1989, a high school classmate of Jayananda's attended ISKCON's Ratha-yatra festival in Durban, South Africa and there a devotee showed him a small photo of Jayananda on Jagannatha's chariot. He was very much impressed and wrote to his other classmates that there, 11,000 miles from Los Angeles, the same Lord Jagannatha was worshipped and all devotees knew how Jayananda had worshipped Him !

Durban is not the only place in Africa where Lord Jagannatha is worshipped. In Kenya, for the last twenty years Ratha-yatra has been taking place annually in Nairobi (the capital), Mombasa

and more recently, in Kisumu. Many thousands of people participate and these festivals have been praised and supported by successive governments and leaders down through the years as being an inspiration and bringing together of the many tribes and diverse groups all under one Lord and Master, Jagannatha.

Indeed, Lord Jagannatha's glories have been broadcast on each and every continent and His devotees can be found everywhere. In Auckland, New Zealand, Srila Prabhupada has installed the Deities of Jagannatha, Balarama and Subhadra. This year, 2003, Ratha-yatra is held for the first time in Mexico. Lord Jagannatha is worshipped in Brazil and other countries of South America. One of the restaurants run by ISKCON devotees in Buenos Aires, Argentine, is called "Jagannatha Prasadam". Similarly, in Moscow, Russia, there is a very popular restaurant, which is managed by devotees and called "Jagannath Express."

ISKCON temple in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, is known as "Jagannatha Mandir". One of ISKCON's temples and communities in Bangladesh is also called "Sri Jagannatha Mandir", and the place where it is situated is known as Jagannathpur. Both in Malaysia and in Bangladesh Ratha-yatra has been held regularly since 1980's and Muslims together with Hindus happily participate in these festivals. In Zurich, Switzerland, the presiding Deities are Jagannatha, Balarama and Subhadra, the place is known as "New Jagannatha Puri", and the Ratha-yatra is held annually. In Spain, the Ratha-yatra is held in three cities : Madrid, Barcelona and Malaga. In Italy, this



festival is held in Milan. And of course in India Lord Jagannatha's Ratha-yatras are arranged by ISKCON devotees in many important places, like Delhi, Mathura, Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Mayapur, Mumbai, Baroda, Bangalore. etc.

In early 1977, The Nava-kalevara year, Srila Prabhupada came to Orissa to lay the foundation stone of ISKCON temple in Bhubaneswar. On several occasions Srila Prabhupada has explained that because devotees from other countries (even though they had fully adopted the Vaisnava philosophy and way of living) are not allowed into Lord Jagannatha's Temple in Puri, he wants another beautiful temple to be constructed (in Sri Ksetra) where anyone, from any country and any community, can come and have darsana of the Lord of the Universe. This was Srila Prabhupada's last-founded project. Also, in January 1977 in Bhubaneswar he started the English translation of the Tenth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam.

In November 1977, just a few days before Srila Prabhupada departed this world, his disciple Gour Govinda Swami came from Bhubaneswar to Vrindavan to see him and to narrate various details of the Ratha-yatra festival, which was special in many ways that year in Puri. Srila Prabhupada listened with great interest and asked many questions. He was especially concerned that the great ancient tradition should be continued purely. After many years of determined endeavour the devotees under the leadership of Gour Govinda Maharaja fulfilled Srila Prabhupada's instruction, and the magnificent ISKCON Mandir in

Bhubaneswar was opened on Rama Navami in 1991. Since then this temple has grown into a flourishing spiritual, cultural and preaching project that attracts thousands of visitors, especially during the Ratha-yatra, Chandan-yatra, Snana-yatra and other festivals.

After the closure of Srila Prabhupada's manifested pastimes, his followers continued to introduce Lord Jagannatha's worship and the Ratha-yatra festival in new places. With the fall of communist regimes, the Ratha-yatra started in East Europe and different parts of the former USSR, including Muslim countries like Kazakhstan. In Budapest, Hungary, and in Sofia, Bulgaria, the Ratha-yatra is held. In Riga, Latvia, there are Deities of Jagannatha, Balarama and Subhadra, and They have Their Ratha-yatra both in Latvia and in Lithuania. In Russia, Jagannatha Deities are worshipped in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Rostov, Sochi, Seversk, Tomsk, etc., etc. It should be noted that this article contains only a very incomplete list of ISKCON centres where Jagannatha Deities are worshipped and the Ratha-yatra is held. Besides that, there are hundreds and thousands of devotees all over the world, who may or may not be connected to the local ISKCON centre, but who worship Jagannatha at their homes. It is not possible for us to mention or even to know all these devotees, therefore we are simply listing some of the places where Jagannatha Deities are installed in a temple and the Ratha-yatra is held. In Saratov, on the great Russian river Volga, the devotees arrange the Ratha-yatra every year since the early 1990s. In the Ural (Ekaterinburg, Perm) and in Siberia



(Novokuznetsk, Omsk) the Ratha-yatra is also held annually. In Vladivostok, a major city in the Far East, ISKCON devotees arrange the Ratha-yatra every year since 1991, and the place is known as "New Jagannatha Puri". Even in some smaller places the Ratha-yatra is held. For example, in Vladimir (an ancient town not far from Moscow) a small group of devotees under the leadership of a very enthusiastic and dedicated lady, whose name is Subhadra Devi Dasi, has been arranging Ratha-yatra festivals annually since the mid 1990s. In Dnepropetrovsk, an important city in the Ukraine, their Lordships Jagannatha, Subhadra and Balarama are worshipped in a beautiful temple and the Ratha-yatra has been held every year since 1993. ISKCON's centre in Dnepropetrovsk is known as "New Purusottama Kshetra."

In "old" places, like North America and the United Kingdom, more cities are joining the "Ratha-yatra club." Besides San Francisco, New York, London and other cities mentioned above, this festival is held in Washington, Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, Jersey City, Boston, Boise, Buffalo, Berkeley, Birmingham, Leicester, Manchester, Brighton, etc.

1996 was the year of Nava-kalevara ("New Body" of Lord Jagannatha) and the 100th anniversary of Srila Prabhupada's appearance in this world. That year, as an offering to Lord Jagannatha and to Srila Prabhupada, ISKCON organized the first Ratha-yatra in the history of Scandinavia. It was held in Stockholm, nearby the palace of the king of Sweden, and devotees from other countries also came to participate in this festival.

Our knowledge, time and space being limited, it was not possible for us to mention here all the places throughout the world where Lord Jagannatha's Ratha-yatra is held. And to give a complete description of all these Ratha-yatras would be impossible even for Ananta Sesa Naga, what to speak of our humble self. Lord Jagannatha's pure devotees always expand His glory, and even this tiny presentation could be made only by their mercy.



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FOOTNOTES :

1. Based on the explanation which was given by Srila Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja on July 11, 1994 at ISKCON Mandir in Bhubaneswar and published by Gopal Jiu Publications, Bhubaneswar - 1997 in "Sri Krishna-kathamurta" magazine, Vol. 3, No. 1 (special issue : "Ratha-yatra rahasya-tattva"), P. 15.
2. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura (alias Kedaranatha Datta) has described the genealogy of his father's family line in his work "Datta-vamsa-mala" (1876, in Sanskrit verse). In 1877 he was selected a member of the Royal Asiatic Society for his book "Maths of Orissa" (1860, English prose). From 1870 to 1875 he



was posted as Deputy Collector and Deputy magistrate of Puri. These and other facts regarding the lives of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura (1838-1914) and Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura (1874-1937), especially regarding their activities in Orissa, are mentioned in "Choti, the Native Place of Srila Thakura Bhaktivinoda", Bhubaneswar - 1999 by Dr. Fakir Mohan Das (Secretary of the International Thakur Bhaktivinode and Thakur Bhaktisiddhanta Memorial Trust). Some other important sources of such information are as follows :

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"Sahitya Shaita" by Dr. Basudev Das, 1986 (Oriya)

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3. Bhaktivinoda's letter to Lalita Prasad thakura, 1896, quoted on P. 131 of "The Seventh Goswami" by Rupa-vilasa Das, Washington, USA, 1989
4. Sri Nityananda Brahmachari, "Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura", p. 582 Published by Bhaktivinoda Ashram, Berhampur, 1984.
5. "Paramarthi" (Oriya monthly), Cuttack : Sacchidananda Math, issue of February, 1976, p. 34.
6. Srila Prabhupada's letter to Hanuman Prasad Poddar, 5th February, 1970. "Srila Prabhupada Sikshamrita", Vol. 3, p. 2047, published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust in Los Angeles, USA, 1992.
7. Srila Prabhupada's letter to Sri Govinda Das, 29th September 1974. Ibid, Vol. 3, p. 1760.
8. Srila Prabhupada's letter to Madhudvisa Das, 14th February, 1970. Ibid, Vol.3, p. 1754.
9. Srila Prabhupada's letter to Yamuna Devi Dasi, June 4th, 1970. Ibid, Vol. 3, p. 1755.
10. Srila Prabhupada's letter to Jayananda Das, 19th July, 1976. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 1249.
11. Srila Prabhupada's letter to Ramesvara Swami, May 11th, 1977. Ibid., Vol. 2, P. 1250.



The Car Festival of Lord Jagannath Unique in many respect

● Dr. Sidhartha Kanungo

The Ratha Yatra or Car Festival Of Lord Jagannath at Puri is the most famous and the most spectacular festival which attracts countless pilgrims from all over India and also from abroad. This festival takes place in Asadha Sukla Dwitiya when the images of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Sudarshana are taken in a grand procession on three separate chariots along the Badadanda from Shrimandira to Gundicha Mandira.

The whole cycle of the Car Festival consists of the following : (i) The Bathing Festival or Snana Yatra, (ii) Anasara, (iii) Netra Utsab, (iv) Naba Jaubana Darsana, (v) The ceremonial procession of images which is otherwise known as Pahandi, (vi) Sweeping of the floor of the chariots by golden broom by Gajapati maharaja of Puri. It is also known as Chherapanhara, (vii) Stay of the Deities in Gundicha Ghar for 7 days, (viii) The return journey of Gods which is known as Bahuda Yatra and (ix) The final return of lord Jagannath to the temple.

As stated earlier, the Ratha Yatra takes place in the Second day of bright fortnight in the month of Asadha. But the

actual preparation starts from the Magha Saptami with the cutting of trees in distant Daspalla and nearby areas for providing the wood necessary for construction of chariots. On the third day of the bright fortnight of Baisakh, i.e. Akshaya Trutiya, starts the auspicious construction of chariots on the Grand Road of Puri. It is indeed a difficult task to construct the Chariots within the short span of 58 days.

Snana Yatra or Bathing Ceremony of Lord Jagannath is held on the full moon day of Jyestha. On this auspicious occasion, the three Deities move in a colourful procession to a platform known as Snanavedi (bathing platforms). Here they bath with one hundred and eight pitchers of perfumed water drawn from a temple well once in a year. After the ritual bath, the Deities assume the special elephant form which is otherwise known as Hati Vesha.

After Snana Yatra, the deities are supposed to fall ill (fever) and do not return to their pedestal. They stay away from the public view for a period of fifteen days. This is known as Anasara. During this period, the deities get fresh coat of painting which gets washed out on the day



of Snana Yatra. The deities appear in their Nabayaubana Vesha literally a renewed youth, on the New Moon Day of the month of Asadha.

Finally comes the Ratha Yatra, on the second day of the bright fortnight of Asadha. On this occasion Four images of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshana are dragged forth in a grand procession by three separate chariots along the Badadanda from Shri Mandir to Gundicha Mandir. The spectacular procession by which deities are brought on the chariot is known as Pahandi. It is the most colourful show of the car Festival held tightly by the arms by Daitapatis and pulled from behind and the front alternatively by the ropes tied firmly to the body, each image is made to jump from place to place and advance. It worthwhile to mention here that no such emotion are evoked among the crowds like Jagannath. When Balabhadra is carried in Pahandi to the Chariot, Subhadra and Sudarshana are just carried by the Daitapatis.

After all the deities are seated in their respective chariots starts the Chhera Pahanra. The Gajapati King of Puri comes in a decorated Palanquin and climbs the Chariots for ceremonial sweeping of floors by a golden broom. This is known as Chhera Pahanra. It presupposes that no labour is detestable if it is required for social purpose.

Then comes the most exciting part of Ratha Yatra is the pulling of chariots by thousands of people without distinction of caste, colour, sex or religion. First moves the Chariot of Balabhadra, next Subhadra's and finally Jagannath's Chariot. Usually they reach the Gundicha temple, the same evening. The deities enter the Gundicha Temple on the next day in the usual Pahandi style and stay there for seven days.

Goddess Laxmi gets angry for being not allowed to go along with Lord Jagannath and proceeds to the Gundicha Temple to meet Lord Jagannath on the Hera Panchami Day, the fifth day from the Ratha Yatra. After having a stealthy look at Her Lord, She returns to Shri Mandir, damaging a part of Jagannath's Chariot in anger and disgust.

As stated earlier, the Deities stay at Gundicha Temple for a period of seven days. Then starts their return journey or Bahuda Yatra. On His way back, Jagannath stopped for few minutes at Mausima Temple or the temple of aunt to take His favourite rice cake or Poda Pitha. On the next day, i.e. Bada Ekadasi, the Deities are attired in costumes of Glittering gold and are worshipped by thousand of devotees. This form of the deities is known as Suna Vesha.

One day after Ekadasi, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Goddess



Subhadra and Sudarshana return to the temple with the usual fanfare and in the Pahandi Style. Thus ends the Ratha Yatra, the grand festival of the Chariots.

It will not be out of place to mention something about the Chariots that the Gods Mount. Without a strong determination, it is indeed very difficult to construct these Chariots within a short span of 58 days.

Lord Jagannath's Chariot is known as Nandighosa. It has a height of 45 feet. It has sixteen wheels, each of seven feet diameter and is decked with red and yellow coverings of cloth. The Sarathi or the Charioteer made of wood is known as Daruka. The Four horses attached to the Chariot are known as Samkha, Rochica, Mochica and Jwalani. They are white in colour. The name of Ratha Pala is Shri Nrusingha. At the crest of the Chariot are the wheel and the image of Garuda. The name of the flag of Nandighosa is Trailokyamohini. It may be pointed out that 832 pieces of wood are used in Nandighosa. Nandighosa is draped in yellow cloth.

The Chariot of Lord Balabhadra, called Taladwhaja, has fourteen wheel

each of seven feet diameter with red and blue cloth. It has a height of forty-four feet. The name of the Sarathi is Sudyaumna. The four wooden black horses attached to the Chariot bear the names of Sthira, Dhruti, Stiti and Siddha. The Rathapala is Ananata and 763 pieces of wood are used in this Chariot. The name of the flag of the Chariot is Unnani.

The Chariot of the Subhadra is known as Darpadalana, height is forty three feet with twelve wheels, each of seven feet diameter. This Chariot is covered with red and black cloth. The name of Sarathi is Arjuna. Four wooden horses fixed to the Chariot as known as Prajna, Anuja, Ghora and Aghora. The Rathapalika is Vana Durga. 539 pieces of wood are used in this Chariot and the name of the Chariot is Nadambika.

The Ratha Yatra is being conducted at Puri since long ago. It is indeed very difficult to say since what date it has started. The festival will continue so long as the Sanatana Dharma exists on the earth.



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Conservation Problems Remedial Measures of Lord Jagannath Temple, Puri - An over view

● Dr. Jevan Patnaik

The state of Orissa is a great repository of art and architecture. These historical edifices or cultural wealth have hoary antiquity datable from 3rd century B.C. to 16th/17th century A.D. Since these monuments are diverse in nature, the conservation problems too vary from one to the other.

One of such outstanding monuments of Orissa is the Jagannath Temple, Puri ($19^{\circ}56'30''$ - $85^{\circ}59'$) is located near the sea shore. The stupendous Vaishnava Temple is dedicated to the trinity viz, Jagannath, Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra. But popularly it is known as Jagannath Temple. The Temple was constructed probably by Ananta Varman Chodaganga Deva, the illustrious king of the Ganga Dynasty in 12th century A.D. Presently, this temple is a centrally protected monument under Archeological Survey of India, Bhubaneswar Circle, since 1975 who is responsible for its upkeep, maintenance and preservation etc.

The edifice is not only the grandest but also a soaring surviving shrine of Orissa (Approx. 66m). This gigantic structure along with other subsidiary shrines were covered with coats of heavy lime plaster many times, thereby obscured the beauty of pristine carvings of the monument. This heavy plastering applied to the monument with the purpose to protect from saline breeze or salt-laden wind of the sea, served the purpose no

more and caused the condition of the monuments precarious ; this had made the structures vulnerable to damage. The plaster of lime coat had became spongy and porous, that it developed the profuse leakage, The Temple complex being in the proximity of sea, had suffered extensive erosion and corrosion. Co-mingled with these factors, lime plaster applied over the structures over the years has lost its inherent strength and during the rainy season water penetration became more to the entire fabric of the structure. This wet condition had accelerated the rusting of iron clamps and dowels & increased their volumes thus resulted in cracks and structural damage to the stones. Monuments in one part of the structure may have also affected the other integrated parts of the structure, gradually created tension through out. The pressure exerted by the heavy weight of lime plaster has added to the structural damage & weakened the stone underneath.

In addition to these, it may be reiterated with other deleterious factors that the monument being in the proximity of sea and almost in the heavy rain fall zone, (Orissa coast), the monument is susceptible to heavy penetration of rain water into its body fabric.

As observed from the study, perhaps the most ingenious and least understood form of decay in stone is that caused by the migration and



crystallization of soluble salts. The progression of salt migration depends on the cycles of wet and dry phases. Since the Temple had been covered with plaster many years after construction, the salt-encrusted stones had not been removed before plastering and subsequently the applied coat of lime plaster itself might have been contaminated with salt. Thus the double action of salt on stone as well as on plaster continued to migrate as long as moisture is present. Accordingly, the salt themselves, change the chemical balance of stone they inhabit by absorbing moisture and accelerated the decay of the structure.

So with a view to examine the weakness and consolidation of the shrines of the monumental complex, an expert committee was constituted under the Chairmanship of Sri M.N. Deshpande, the-then Director General, Archeological Survey India in 1973. Subsequently, Archeological Survey of India undertook its conservation in 1975 with the main objective to strengthen and consolidate the grandest edifice by adopting conservation measures as per archeological norms and to remove the unnecessary huge load of dead plaster which is no longer serving its purpose for which it was intended. The deplastering and simultaneous conservation work which started from 1975 ended in 1992. Thickness of the lime plaster over the sanctum sanctorum was maximum 45 cms. The same coat of lime plaster was also applied to other subsidiary shrines of the complex. Other important shrines having the plaster were Lakshmi Temple, Narasimha Temple, Surya Temple, Vimala Temple, Ganesha Temple etc. Apart from the deplastering of the main sanctum of

Jagannath Temple, the shrines mentioned above were prioritised for deplastering and subsequent consolidation one after another. The removal of plaster was carried out by the traditional method of breaking the plaster from the wall with the help of chisel and wooden hammer. Further to protect the architectural beauty and fine carvings due precautions were taken. Before reaching very close to the stone surface, hammering was stopped and the rest of the plaster was removed by hard pressure by the chisel.

The deplastered surface of Jagannath Temple has brought to light rich sculptural and architectural wealth as those of other temples of Kalingan order. Most noteworthy discovery has been the 24 forms of Vishnu carved on either side of pilasters of the Parsva devatas shrines being represented standing on lotuses each with 4 arms equipped with attributes viz. Sankha (Conch), Chakra (Disc), Gada (Mace) and Padma (Lotus).

Side by side with the deplastering and conservation of Jagannath Temple, similar operations were undertaken in Narasimha, Surya, Ganesha and Vimala temples in the complex.

The conservation measures after removal of lime plaster were carried out in 2 stages (i) Structural Conservation and (ii) Chemical preservation.

(i) Structural Conservation :- The techniques involved in structural conservation start from resetting of the old stones by means of proper documentation of large stone members. The small architectural pieces were reset using cement, lime and sand mortar in the ratio of 1:1:3. To reset the bigger ones, non-corroding stainless steel dowels/clamps



were used. Finally the consolidation of core masonry was done with epoxy mortar and all cracks were stitched thereby. Renewal of the missing and wornout stones were done by obtaining new khondalite stone from Tapang quarry. They were cut, dressed and finished into shape to be fixed properly in place. Epoxy resin was used in the resetting process of stone members. Again replacement of deteriorated portion of stone were done, while its architectural originality was maintained as far as possible. The old rusted iron dowels/clamps responsible for cracks and damage to the stone members were replaced by stainless dowels wherever possible.

Hard grouting, gravity grouting as per requirement, were executed in order to fill the vertical cracks and voids with a mixture of Portland cement and water. After that pointing with epoxy putty was followed. Corbelled were to be anchored with stainless steel rods by drilling 1.5 to 2 metre holes and sealing with epoxy pointing. To arrest further falling of corbell stones in garbhagriha, it was decided to provide a second line of defence by resting a stainless steel truss or space frame below the corbells.

(ii) Chemical preservation :- After removal of lime plaster, the exposed surface had mainly hardened lime accretion. The lime accretions were removed by 2% dilute acetic acid followed by careful paper pulp treatment for desalination on stones. In order to prevent biological growth on the stone surface 2% zinc silica fluoride solution was applied. Again with the recommendation of expert committee, one coat of 2% methyl Methacrylate solution in toluene to slow down the weathering of exposed stone

surface was also applied which would have a life of at least one decade.

To sum up, the responsibility of the Archeological survey of India is not over, it has been closely maintaining as well as executing conservation works of Lord Jagannath Temple as and when required. The works of conservation is on going since some of the problems are perpetual in nature.



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Jagannath Worship in North-Eastern India

● Dr. Byomakesh Tripathy

Jagannath, the Lord of the universe, is worshipped not only in Orissa but also in different parts of India since ancient times. Historical sources in the form of literature, epigraphs, art, paintings, temples, folk tradition etc, do indicate the worship of the God from early historical period. With the erection of Jagannath temple in different parts of India, Jagannath has assumed pan-Indian popularity and the Car Festival has become a national festival. The temple of celebrated sacred centre in India, has been attracting pilgrimage from the nook and corner of India throughout the ages. In this paper, an attempt have been made to highlight the spread of Jagannath cult in various parts of eastern India, (except Orissa) including states of north-east India, specifically in Assam, Manipur and Tripura in a historical perspective.

JAGANNATH WORSHIP IN ASSAM :

The state of Assam, earlier known as Prag-Jyotisha and Kamarupa had intimate socio-political-cultural contact with Kalinga (Orissa) at least from early historical period. We are not certain as to when and how Jagannath cult became popular in Assam. However, an analysis of Kalika Purana (datable to 11th century or may be earlier) make us to understand that at the time of the compilation of the celebrated text of Kamarupa, Jagannath was already popular in various parts of India. The Kalika Purana is perhaps the earliest literature of Assam, in which reference to Jagannath can be gleaned. The work states that the first Brahmanical tantrik pitha in India originated

and developed in Odradesa (identified with Oddiyana or modern Orissa), where the Goddess resides in the form of Odresvari Katyayani and her consort as Odesa Jagannath. The Yogini Tantra, a tantrik text of Kamarupa of 16th century further mentions the greatness of Jagannath, and attempts to link the celebrated Hayagriva image of Kamarupa with that of Jagannath at Puri. The work throws an account on the origin of the stone image of Hayagriva Madhava, the celebrated vaisnava pitha of Assam, in the light of the story of the wooden images of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra of the great temple of Puri as recounted in the Brahma Purana. The text mentions that king Indradyumna of Orissa dreamt at night regarding a big nameless tree, which would come floating by the sea shore and he was to take an axe, and cut it into seven pieces, out of which two pieces of wood were taken to Kamarupa, to prepare images of Visnu and still another piece to Manikuta, the latter to be converted into an image known as Hayagriva Madhava. All the three images were of stone wood - Silamaya Darumaya. The Assamese work, Manikuta of 1686 A.D. repeats the same tale. It is to be noted here that Yogini Tantra has been strongly influenced by the Brahma Purana, which centered round Jagannath worship. The system of worship of various mantras of Hayagriva worship in the final chapters of the Yogini Tantra are based on or copied from the code of Jagannath as given in the Brahma Purana. In fact, those who are incharge of the administration of Hayagriva Madhava temple affairs have tried to keep



the traditional similarity between their temple and the Jagannath temple at Puri. Even it has been the custom to care visitors on the entrance of the Hayagriva Madhav temple at Hajo, near Gauhati as in the Jagannatha temple of Puri. Here, we may mention that both Kamarupa and Uddiyana (Orissa) were the primary pithas of Vajrayana and the temple of Jagannatha at Puri and the temple of Kamakhya, near Gauhati respectively were established on the spots bearing identical name Nilachala and this name is still attached to both the celebrated shrines.

The Buranjis, historical literature of medieval Assam, while referring to Assam-Orissa contact, give some insight on Jagannatha worship in medieval Assam. One Assam Buranji, written by Harkanta Sadar Amin states that the Ahom King Suhungmung or Swarganarayana (c 1497-1539 A.D.) of Assam, after his successful conquest of Kamata kingdom, deputed one Chankham Ghar Sandikai as his envoy to instal Kamateswar (king of Kamata), on the throne of Koch Behar and ordered him to proceed to the Jagannatha Thakur (Puri) for worship and constructing a tank for the deity. It is recorded that on behalf of the king, the pilgrims offered to the deity Jagannatha, a gem, which the pilgrims said to have collected from a cobra at Suryapahar (Surya hill) in modern Goalpara district of Assam. The chronicle further mentions that Suhungmung had provided two hundred gold coins to the party, of which, forty were paid as bonus to the labourers engaged in excavating the tank, sixty to the Brahmins, sixty gold coins to the deity Jagannatha and remaining forty to the king of Orissa, the superintendent of the temple. In this connection, the text throws some light on the management system of the Jagannath temple at Puri and states that both the king

as well as the people of Orissa were the subjects of the Lord. It is also known as that the king was merely a servant of the God Jagannath and many families of Orissa depended for their livelihood upon the great temple of Jagannath. At least eighty nine thousand people used to take Mahaprasada (bhoga) of the temple everyday. For the worship of Jagannath, five hundred loads of dhupa and equal quantity of duna were required every year. The chronicle further mentions about the popular and famous legend of Kanchi-Kaveri, related to Jagannath temple. It is told that the visit to Jagannath Kshetra was arranged by the mission through Vikramisena, then king of Orissa. Chronologically, the contemporary of Suhungmung in Orissa was Prataprudradeva, the Gajapati ruler of Orissa, who was most probably referred to as Vikramisena in the Ahom Buranjis. But so far we do not have any idea whether Prataprudradeva was known as Vikramisena, in any literature of Orissa. Another Buranji entitled Purani Asam Buranji, said to have compiled in latter part of 17th century, corroborates the evidence of the excavating a tank by a Kamarupa Mission at Jagannath Kshetra in 1483 A.D. Thus, the Buranjis are not unanimous regarding the year of the visit of Kamarupa Mission to Puri. However, we have strong reasons to believe that most probably the Mission visited Puri during the end of fifteenth or beginning of sixteenth century A.D.

A mention has been made of Lord Jagannath in biographical literature of Sankaradeva, the great reformer of medieval Assam. Sankaradeva is said to have visited the Jagannath Dham, Puri twice, first in 1490 A.D. and then in 1550 A.D. In those days, the holy Jagannath



Kshetra was the seat of Vaisnava inspiration, where Vaisnavas and Bhakti reformers from all parts of India used to assemble. We are told that while staying at Puri, Sankaradeva used to read and explain the Brahma Purana, which mainly centered round the cult of Jagannath to the priest of the God and other people. Aniruddha Kayastha, a Vaisnavite writer of seventeenth century has beautifully described how Sankaradeva visited Puri, served the feet of the Lord Jagannath for a long time and returned to his native place (Assam) after receiving agnya or divine orders. Ramananda Dvija, another biographer, further states that once he visited the temple of Jagannath at Puri, Sankaradeva resolved not to bow down his head to any other deity. It is also known that Sankaradeva received a copy of Bhagavata Purana from one Jagadish Misra, who came from Puri to Assam at the bidding of Lord Jagannath to recite the scripture before Sankaradeva. Vaisnava chronicle, Kathagurucarita informs that after having received the Bhagavata Purana, Sankara celebrated Jagannath in twenty-one kirtanas. The Uresa Varnana section, which seems to be the earliest kirtana of Sankaradev, describes the mythological origin of the images of Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath. The story of king Indradyumna and the installation of three deities, Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra have also been described. The twenty first kirtana speaks of the results that accrue from singing the glory of Lord Jagannath and taking Mahaprasada. Daityari Thakur, another biographer, while referring to worship of Jagannath by Sankaradeva records how at the instruction of Sankaradeva, an image of Jagannath was made by one Karala Badhai, an artisan and was installed at Dhuwahat and at the time of Sankar's departure from

Dhuwahat, this image was left on a tree, later to be installed by Vamsigopala, a Vaisnava guru in his Debarapar Sattra. In other writings of Sankaradeva like Ajamil Upakhyana, Anadi Pataka and Sansara Chakra, the greatness of Jagannath is reflected. Another work, entitled the Ghunucha Kirtana, composed by Sridhar Kandli, a celebrated medieval Assamese poet of 16th century A.D. also made people familiar with the episodes of Jagannatha. Reference to worship of Jagannath can also be noticed in the writings of British period as well as in archaeological source of Assam. We are informed that the tribal ruler of Assam, Krishnachandra of Cachari family of Cacher of 18th century was a great worshipper of Kali and Jagannath. The British record of 19th century also attests to the fact that Kali, Jagannath and Vasideva were the principal deities worshipped by the local people of Assam.

Regarding, archaeological sources, mention may be made of a copper land grant dated Saka 1709 (A.D. 1787) found at a Vaisnava institution at Gauhati near Ketakibari Sattra, which in its preamble mentions that a vigraha of Jagannath was given to a Brahmin along with the donated land and the Brahmin donees have been specially instructed to perform daily bath along with Nama-kirtana for three times daily and recitation from the Bhagavata in the Sattra. Representation of the deity Jagannath is also noticed in the scriptural art as well as folk art of Assam. Even a few temples dedicated to God Jagannath can be noticed, particularly in lower Assam region. A famous old Jagannath temple is reported from a village Mitani near Khetri railway station in modern district of Kamarupa, where wooden icons of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra are



worshipped daily. The four wheels of Mahaprabhu's stone chariot can be located near the temple and the festivals like the Snana-yatra, Dalo-yatra and Ratha-yatra are regularly held here. Temples of Jagannath are also noticed in the village Belbari, Kotalkuchi and other parts of Kamarupa.

The cult of Jagannath became so popular in Assam that the Assamese womenfolk not only composed prayer songs eulogizing the glory of Lord Jagannath, but also performed various ceremonies regarding the deity. One of the prayer songs, known as Jagannatharnam, is said to be popular in Kamarupa area, in which songs of Jagannath are sung by the womenfolk every evening during the whole month of Vaisakha. The song reflects the popular belief that in the beginning of the year i.e. the month of Vaisakha, Lord Jagannath pays a visit to the village to rescue the people from epidemics, financial hardship and brings prosperity and happiness to the royal family as well as to the common people. Hence for his propitiation, the prayer service is held in the beginning of the year. The ceremony is generally held by the roadside under a wood apple or banyan tree, otherwise a tulasi or young plantain tree is planted in the courtyard of the house to perform the said ceremony. In this ceremony, a small pedestal of earth surrounding the tree or the plant is raised, in which a naivedya (offerings) of rice, mangudal, varieties of fruits, earthern lamps, incense and a pair of arecanuts and betel leaves are kept as offering to the deity. The prayers continue for about an hour and after the prayer, the naivedya is distributed among the devotees.

A unique form of ceremony performed in honour of Lord Jagannath in

various villages of Kamarupa is the mock marriage of the deity. In the village Chamarkuchi of district Kamarupa, this ceremony is held regularly. There are two nam-ghars in the village, which play an important role in the mock marriage ceremony. On the Chaitra Sankranti, four plantain trees are erected in four corners of each nam-ghar and from that prayers are held regularly with the offering of naivedya to Jagannath for the whole month of Vaisakha. The mock marriage takes place on the Vaisakha Sankranti i.e. the last day of the ceremony. On the day preceding the marriage, two young banana plants are fixed vertically on a raft made of banana trunks, in one of the nam-ghars. Of the two plants, one is considered as bridegroom i.e. the Lord Jagannath and the other as 'bestman' of the marriage. In the same manner, three young banana plants, symbolic of the bride Ghunucha, her mother and friend are kept in the other nam-ghar of the village. All the five banana plants are bedecked with vermillion, flowers and garlands. On the next day, the mock marriage takes place with Sastric rites and social customs. Rituals like fetching of water, Sraddha ceremony, bridal procession and tying of nuptial knot are performed. At the end of the ceremony, the banana plants representing the 'pair' and their attendants are immersed. During the mock marriage, Nandi-sraddha i.e. paying homage to ancestors of the groom and bride is also performed. It is followed by another simple ceremony known as Duni-bhananam. Duni (Droni) is represented by a bamboo basket in which rice, potatoes, betel nuts and coins etc. are kept on the occasion of Nandisraddha. These articles are preserved till the fifth, seventh or ninth day after the marriage day, when certain devotional folksongs are sung by the womenfolk in honour of Jagannath. At the



end of the ceremony, the articles offered to Lord Jagannath and contained in Duni and naivedya are distributed among the womenfolk. In some places, particularly in village Sandheli of Nalbari subdivision and Sundandiya of Barpeta, a kind of religious fair, known as Jagannathar Sabha is held where the womenfolk use to collect money and rice from the neighbouring villages and offer prayers.

JAGANNATH WORSHIP IN MANIPUR :

In the north-eastern state of Manipur, the influence of Jagannath cult is clearly noticed in the socio-cultural life of Manipuri Hindus. Though Vaisnavism entered Manipur fairly early, it was not the religion of the masses till the beginning of 18th century. King Charai-Rongba (1697-1709) was the first king of Manipur who was formally initiated into Vaisnavism. It is told that a Brahmin named Rai Vanamali, an authority on the cult of Radhakrishna arrived in Manipur in 1703 A.D. from Sveta Ganga, Puri (Orissa) and he initiated the king and many of his subjects into the fold of Vaisnavism. However, the earliest reference to Jagannath and Ratha yatra in Manipur is known from the time of Manipuri king Gambhira Singh, who is said to have started the Ratha yatra festival in 1832 A.D., locally called as "Kangchinba". The darbar of Manipur Maharajas used to make special allotment of funds for the celebration of various Hindu festivals including that of Ratha yatra every year. The main Ratha yatra starts in Manipur from Sri Gobindinji temple, near the palace of the king at Imphal. All the rites and rituals as observed at Puri during the Ratha yatra are followed in Manipur. Even icons of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra all made of wood of 19th century and early part of 20th century have been noticed in Manipur. An image of

Jagannath is located at Bijoygovinda, Imphal, where the deity is shown having arms but no hands and the body is leg-less and the head is almost that. The deity is painted with black colour. Balabhadra and Subhadra are also of the same form except the difference in size and white colour. Even today the cult of Jagannath is followed by the Vaisnavas of Manipur, who consider Puri, the abode of Jagannath as the holiest of the holy.

JAGANNATH WORSHIP IN TRIPURA :

In the state of Tripura, we do get some references about the worship of Jagannath. Here it is interesting to note that, the Tripura Maharaja Kalyanmanikya performed Tulapurusadanam, Mahadanam, Kapitadanam and during the performance of Tulapurusadanam, many renowned scholars from Mathura, Benaras, Orissa and Setubandha arrived in Tripura and received awards and Dakshinas from the king in or around 1600 A.D. This reference provides some clues regarding cultural contact of Orissa with Tripura in medieval period. It is worthy to note that Maharaja Krishnamanikya, the Manikya ruler of Tripura is said to have donated fifteen dronas of land to the Brahmins to conduct the daily puja of Lord Jagannath in Tripura era 1186(1766 A.D.). This is perhaps the earliest historical reference to Jagannath worship in Tripura. In fact, a few Jagannath temples of 18th-19th century, built by the members of royal family are reported from Tripura.

Thus, a perusal of historical datas throw light on the spread of Jagannath cult in various regions of eastern India. The literature of British period attests to the fact that people from Assam, Bengal,



Bihar and neighbouring states used to visit the holy city of Puri, to worship Jagannath and witness the famous Ratha yatra. It is significant to note that as early as 10th century or so, the popularity of Jagannath as a celebrated deity, was known to the people of Assam. But when and how the cult spread to different parts of eastern India and even to other parts of India is a matter of academic research. We hope that further studies on the spread of Jagannath cult in various parts of India as well as outside India (like Bali island), should be undertaken at the right earnest, so that we can know more about the importance of the cult of Jagannath, the greatest symbol of Oriya culture.



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